

State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Between 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road and Elwood Road along
State Route 180 in Squaw Valley in Fresno County

06-FRE-180-PM 89.6-90.7

Project ID Number 0620000037

State Clearinghouse Number 2022060682

Initial Study with Mitigated Negative Declaration

Volume 1 of 2



Prepared by the
State of California Department of Transportation

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General Information About This Document

Document prepared by: Chelsea Starr, Acting Senior Environmental Planner

[The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The Initial Study circulated to the public for 32 days between June 30, 2022, and July 31, 2022. Comments received during this period are included in Appendix B. Elsewhere, language has been added throughout the document to indicate where a change has been made since the circulation of the draft environmental document. Minor editorial changes and clarifications have not been so indicated.

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State Clearinghouse Number 2022060682
06-FRE-180-PM 89.6-90.7
Project ID Number 0620000037

Install a two-way left-turn lane on State Route 180 from post miles 89.6 to
90.7 in Fresno County

**INITIAL STUDY
with Mitigated Negative Declaration**

Submitted Pursuant to: (State) Division 13, California Public Resources Code

THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Transportation



Jennifer H. Taylor
Environmental Office Chief, District 6
California Department of Transportation
CEQA Lead Agency

09/15/2022

Date

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Mitigated Negative Declaration

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

State Clearinghouse Number: 2022060682

District-County-Route-Post Mile: 06-FRE-180-PM 89.6-90.7

EA/Project Number: EA 06-1A460 and Project ID Number 0620000037

Project Description

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen the south side of State Route 180 by 15 feet and install a two-way left-turn lane within the project limits. Other work will include upgrading drainage systems through the project limits and installing one traffic monitoring station system.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by Caltrans, District 6.

On the basis of this study, it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

The project will have no effect on agriculture and forest resources, air quality, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, paleontological resources, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, utilities and service systems, or wildfire.

The project will have less than significant effects to greenhouse gases.

With the following mitigation measures incorporated, the project will have less than significant effects to aesthetics and biological resources:

- Replacement planting for vegetation removed or damaged by the project—The project will remove seven existing oak trees. Per Caltrans standards, trees removed for highway improvements must be replaced at a minimum 1-to-1 ratio. It is expected that replacement planting will deliver a 1-to-5 ratio or 35 new trees. To achieve this replanting ratio, additional trees will be planted within the suitable existing right-of-way. If necessary, additional planting can take place within Caltrans' right-of-way outside of the project limits or through partnerships with other organizations. The trees will be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species.
- The removal of a large, multi-boled (more than one trunk) blue oak tree with a diameter at breast height of 43 inches will be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio.

- [The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Replacement planting will be accompanied by a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan, which will include monitoring and maintenance to ensure a 70 percent minimum survival rate after five years.
- Mitigation via in-lieu fees for temporary and permanent impacts to less than 0.10 acre of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional waterways is expected.

Jennifer H Taylor

Jennifer H. Taylor
Environmental Office Chief, District 6
California Department of Transportation

09/15/2022

Date

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Chapter 1 **Proposed Project**

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to widen the south side of State Route 180 by 15 feet and install a two-way left-turn lane between 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road and Elwood Road in Squaw Valley in Fresno County. The project will be from post mile 89.6 to post mile 90.7. A Build Alternative and a No-Build (No-Action) Alternative are being considered. See Figure 1-1 for the project vicinity map and Figure 1-2 for the project location map.

The surrounding land use is mainly rural residential, general commercial, and exclusive agricultural, with some heavy industrial, commercial, and light manufacturing. Within the project area, State Route 180 runs east and west through the rural unincorporated community of Squaw Valley. At this location, State Route 180 is a two-lane undivided conventional highway with 12-foot lanes and 2-foot shoulders. Multiple paved and unpaved rural driveways on both sides of the highway provide access to residences and commercial businesses. Within the project limits, the existing right-of-way width is 120 feet and is bordered on both sides by fencing on private property near the right-of-way line.

The project's escalated 2023/2024 construction cost was estimated at \$2,700,000. The project is programmed in the 2023/2024 State Highway Operation and Protection Program.

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve safety and reduce collisions on State Route 180 in Squaw Valley.

1.2.2 Need

The project is needed to reduce the exposure of vehicles that are waiting to make left turns from State Route 180 and to provide refuge for vehicles that are turning onto State Route 180.

Traffic Investigation Report 184-00010 revealed there were 12 collisions within the project study limits between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2017. Of the 12, two were rear-end collisions attributed to speeding, five were broadside collisions attributed to the failure to yield, speeding, and other violations, two collisions involved vehicles hitting an object, which were

attributed to speeding and other violations, one overturn collision attributed to speeding, and two other collisions attributed to reasons other than the driver. Four collisions resulted in injuries, and one resulted in a fatality. The fatal collision occurred when a vehicle traveling southbound made a left turn onto eastbound State Route 180 and was struck by a motorcycle traveling on westbound State Route 180. The motorcyclist was killed because the driver of the vehicle entering the highway failed to yield to traffic. The incident occurred during the day with clear weather conditions and a dry roadway surface.

The collision rates for the most recent three-year period (January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2019) for this section of State Route 180 are shown in Table 1.1 below: In Table 1.1, total collisions mean the total number of collisions that did not result in injuries or fatalities.

Table 1.1 Collision Rates in Collisions per Million Vehicles on State Route 180 From Post Mile 89.6 to Post Mile 90.7

State Route 180 (Post Mile 89.6 to Post Mile 90.7)	Fatal	Fatal and Injury	Total Collisions
Actual (Collisions per Million Vehicles)	0.198	0.79	1.38
Statewide Average (Collisions per Million Vehicles)	0.024	0.45	0.98

Source: Draft Project Report, 2022

The actual fatal, fatal and injury, and total collision rates for similar roadways with comparable traffic volumes are higher than the statewide average. The performance objective of this project is to reduce the severity and number of collisions for the life of the project. The project will achieve this objective by reducing 20 collisions over the next 20 years.

The proposed two-way left-turn lane will be a continuous turn lane located in the central business corridor of Squaw Valley that will create a refuge lane for vehicles and reduce the number of conflict points for potential collisions.

Rear-end collisions will be reduced because turning vehicles will use the two-way left-turn lane to get out of the way of through traffic. The area where the two-way left-turn lane is proposed has many establishments along State Route 180 that are accessed by the driveway. Currently, when motorists on State Route 180 need to make a left turn to enter the driveway of their destination, they may have to wait in the through lane for oncoming traffic to clear before proceeding to make their left turn. While waiting for oncoming traffic to clear, these motorists may be susceptible to rear-end collisions from motorists approaching from behind. The two-way left-turn lane is intended to provide a lane that separates left-turning vehicles from vehicles traveling on the through lane, thus eliminating the potential for same-direction traffic conflicts.

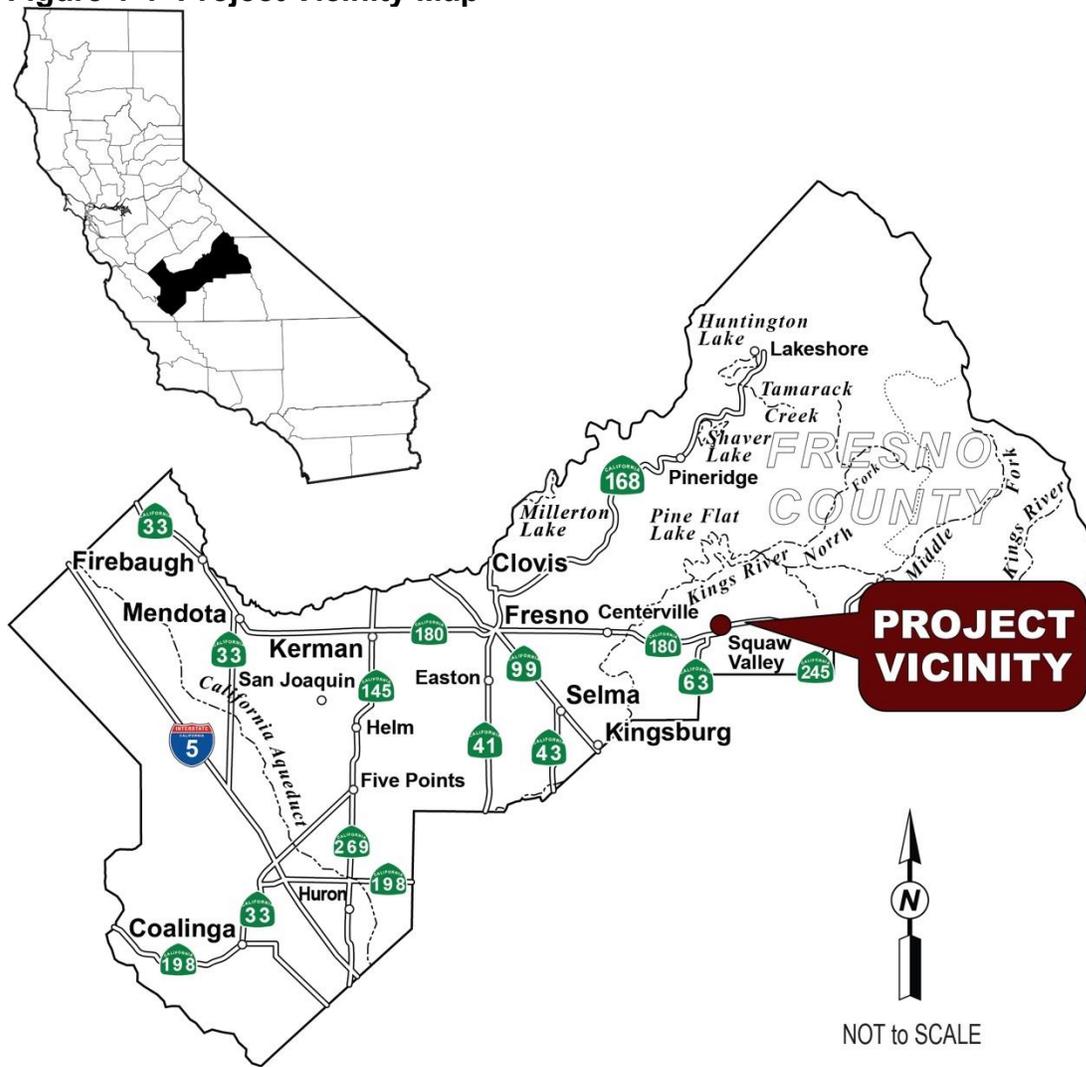
The potential for broadside collisions will be reduced because the two-way left-turn lane will provide a refuge lane that motorists can enter when turning left onto State Route 180 from a driveway. Motorists using the two-way left-turn lane as a refuge lane will not need to wait for a gap in traffic from both directions but will only need to wait for a gap from their left direction before entering the two-way left-turn lane. Left-turning motorists will also be able to use the two-way left-turn lane to accelerate before entering their destination lane.

Speeding collisions will be reduced because the two-way left-turn lane is expected to enhance the potential for through motorists to have a clear path on State Route 180, where the two-way left-turn lane will be located due to the separation of slower, left-turning vehicles from through traffic.

1.3 Project Description

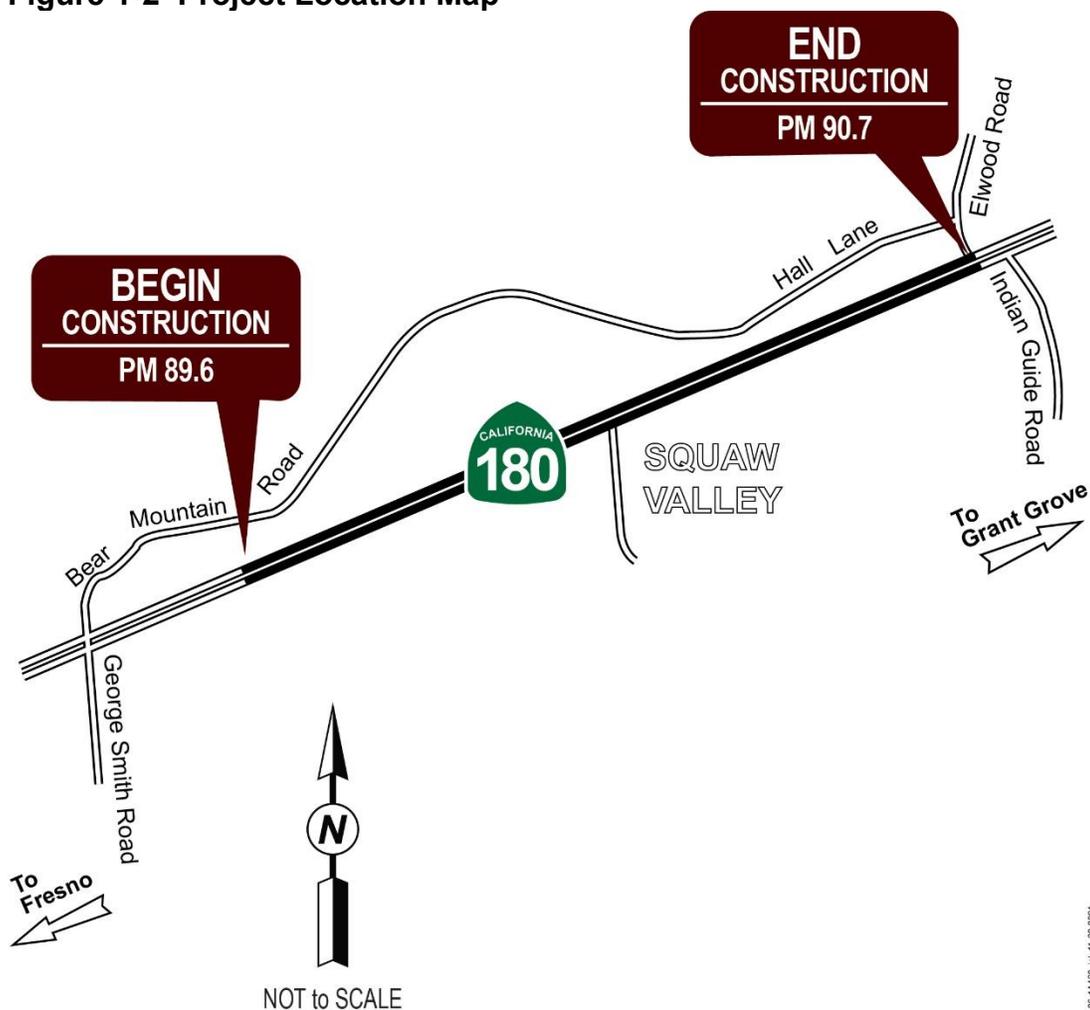
The project proposes to widen the south side of State Route 180 by 15 feet and install a two-way left-turn lane within the project limits. Culverts in the project limits will also be extended on the south side to accommodate the widening. Other work will include upgrading drainage systems through the project limits, repaving existing driveway connections to the southern side of State Route 180, and installing one traffic monitoring station system. Signs within the project limits may need to be relocated. Oak tree and vegetation removal will be required, and construction will occur at night. The project will occur within the existing right-of-way.

Figure 1-1 Project Vicinity Map



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Figure 1-2 Project Location Map



1.4 Project Alternatives

1.4.1 Build Alternatives

The project proposes to widen the south side of State Route 180 by 15 feet and install a two-way left-turn lane within the project limits. Culverts in the project limits will be extended on the south side using similar materials as the existing culverts to accommodate the widening. Flared end sections and rock slope protection will be placed at the outlets, as recommended by the Caltrans Hydraulics Department. Three drainage systems will require the installation of headwalls to retain the project’s footprint within the existing state right-of-way.

Driveways that connect to State Route 180 will be paved from the edge of the shoulder to a minimum of 20 feet past the shoulder or to the edge of the Caltrans right-of-way. Mailboxes, signs, trash bins, and fences within the

project limits that pose as fixed objects will be removed, shielded, replaced with breakaway versions, or relocated outside the clear recovery zone. Existing signs will be relocated and upgraded to current Caltrans standards. Lastly, a traffic monitoring system will be placed at post mile 90.23 on the north side of State Route 180. Oak tree and vegetation removal will be required. No additional right-of-way will be acquired.

Daytime lane closures are expected during construction. Traffic will be shifted to the westbound lane with reversing traffic control and flaggers. Temporary K-Rail (precast concrete barriers) will be used to separate traffic from construction. Breaks in the K-Rail will be provided to maintain access to southern road connections and driveways. Sixty active construction days are expected to be needed to complete the project; night work is also expected. A detailed traffic management plan will be developed during the project design phase.

Nonstandard design features, including a nonstandard 4-foot-wide shoulder and a 2-to-1 side slope, are proposed for this project. The 4-foot-wide shoulder, which will be an incremental improvement from the existing 2-foot-wide shoulder, is proposed to keep the cost of the project within funding limits. The 2-to-1 side slope is proposed at culvert locations in the project limits to keep the project's footprint within the existing right-of-way. Without the nonstandard design feature, the need for additional right-of-way will delay the project's delivery schedule up to 18 months, and the construction cost to make the standard-sized shoulders will exceed available funding. A Design Standard Decision Document for the nonstandard features will be prepared and approved before project approval.

This project contains a number of standardized project measures that are used on most, if not all, Caltrans projects and were not developed in response to any specific environmental impact resulting from the proposed project. These measures are listed later in this chapter under "Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives."

1.4.2 No-Build (No-Action) Alternative

The No-Build (No-Action) Alternative will not meet the purpose and need statement and may result in additional collisions.

1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative

[Section 1.5 Identification of a Preferred Alternative has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The Build Alternative was selected as the preferred alternative because it will preserve the operational integrity of the highway system. Installing a two-way left-turn lane and widening the south side of State Route 180 are necessary to mitigate traffic

collisions and improve the safety of the highway. The Build Alternative is the only alternative that meets the purpose and need of the project.

1.6 Standard Measures and Best Management Practices Included in All Build Alternatives

- Procedures pertaining to air pollution control and dust control will be addressed in Caltrans' Standard Specifications Section 14-9.02, Air Pollution Control, and Section 10-5, Dust Control. These Standard Specifications will be included in the bid package.
- If unanticipated fossil discovery were to occur during construction, Specification Section 14-7.03 of the 2018 Caltrans Standard Specifications, which identifies the procedures required to protect the resource, will be implemented.
- A lead compliance plan developed by a certified industrial hygienist is required and will be addressed in Caltrans' Standard Special Provisions Section 7-1.02K(6)(j)(iii)—Earth Material Containing Lead. This Standard Special Provision will be included in the bid package.
- If yellow striping is removed from the roadway separately, Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 14-11.12 will be included in the bid package. If striping is removed through grinding and cold planing, Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 36-4 or Caltrans Standard Special Provisions Section 84-9.03B, or both, will be included in the bid package.
- Procedures to control erosion, sedimentation, and runoff will be included in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan to be prepared before the start of project construction. The contractor, as required in Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 13-1, must abide by the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and address all potential water quality impacts that may occur during construction operations.
- If the project disturbs 1 acre or more of soil, a Notice of Intent is to be submitted to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board at least 30 days before the start of construction, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan is to be prepared and implemented during construction to the satisfaction of the resident engineer, and a Notice of Termination shall be submitted to the Regional Board upon completion of construction and site stabilization. A project will be considered complete when the criteria for final stabilization in the Construction General Permit are met.
- If less than 1 acre of soil is disturbed, a Water Pollution Control Plan will be required to be prepared by the contractor per the 2018 Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 13-1—Water Pollution.

- During project construction, noise from construction activities may intermittently dominate the noise environment in the immediate area of construction. Construction noise is regulated by Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14-8.02—Noise Control. This Standard Specification states that construction noise resulting from work activities should not exceed 86 A-weighted decibels at 50 feet from the job site from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

1.7 Discussion of the NEPA Categorical Exclusion

This document contains information regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other state laws and regulations. Separate environmental documentation, supporting a Categorical Exclusion determination, has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. When needed for clarity, or as required by CEQA, this document may contain references to federal laws and/or regulations (CEQA, for example, requires consideration of adverse effects on species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—that is, species protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act).

1.8 Permits and Approvals Needed

[The following table has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] The following permits, licenses, agreements, and certifications are required for project construction:

Agency	Permit/Approval	Status
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide Permit	The 404 permit will be obtained before the start of construction.
Regional Water Quality Control Board	Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification	The 401 certification (permit) will be obtained before the start of construction.
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	1600 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement	The 1600 permit will be obtained before the start of construction.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Letter of Concurrence	A Letter of Concurrence was received on July 20, 2022.

Chapter 2 CEQA Evaluation

2.1 CEQA Environmental Checklist

This checklist identifies physical, biological, social, and economic factors that might be affected by the proposed project. Potential impact determinations include Significant and Unavoidable Impact, Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated, Less Than Significant Impact, and No Impact. In many cases, background studies performed in connection with a project will indicate that there are no impacts to a particular resource. A “No Impact” answer reflects this determination. The questions in this checklist are intended to encourage the thoughtful assessment of impacts and do not represent thresholds of significance.

Project features, which can include both design elements of the project and standardized measures that are applied to all or most Caltrans projects, such as Best Management Practices and measures included in the Standard Plans and Specifications or as Standard Special Provisions, are considered to be an integral part of the project and have been considered prior to any significance determinations documented below.

“No Impact” determinations in each section are based on the scope, description, and location of the proposed project as well as the appropriate technical report (bound separately in Volume 2), and no further discussion is included in this document.

2.1.1 Aesthetics

Considering the information in the Visual Impact Assessment dated March 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	No Impact
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway?	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Aesthetics
c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point.) If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	No Impact

Affected Environment

The project is on State Route 180 between Elwood Road and George Smith Road in Squaw Valley in Fresno County, California. The landscape is characterized by rolling hills of oak woodland with the curving, winding highway.

The project is in the foothills of the Sequoia National Forest in Central California. The foothills are bordered on the west by the flat, expansive San Joaquin Valley area of California’s larger Central Valley; to the east is the Sierra Nevada, which is home to Yosemite National Park and Kings Canyon National Park. The land cover in the project corridor is mainly native oak trees, wildflowers, and grasses. Even though the project corridor has occasional buildings, most of the land is not developed. The native oak trees, wildflowers, and grasses highlight the sense of place and define the scenic value of the corridor.

State Route 180 is a designated State Scenic Highway from post mile 78.6 to post mile 137.9. The project falls within those limits. The native oak trees seen along the corridor meet the definition of a “scenic resource,” as defined by CEQA Statute Section 21084(c) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(d).

Environmental Consequences

Visual Resources and Resource Change

Visual resources are defined by assessing visual character and visual quality.

Visual Character

Visual character includes attributes such as form, line, color, and texture and is not considered good or bad. The existing visual character of the project corridor is defined by the small valley in which it lies. The surrounding foothills are described by undulating lines. Also forming curving lines are trees, mostly oaks, which line the natural drainage channels. The oak woodland trees also

form masses of dark color against the lighter vegetation covering the ground. This color contrast is found during all seasons. Trees that are close to the roadway provide much of the interest in the landscape. The trees hide views, which are then revealed as the traveler moves through the valley. The trees are a vertical element that contrasts the otherwise low vegetation. The varying patterns of the trees give diversity to the views. In the spring, native wildflowers are a colorful addition to the typical green or golden grassy landscape.

The change in visual character caused by this project will be the result of the proposed tree removal. The trees proposed for removal are next to the roadway. The loss of trees will remove some of the interest from the corridor, leaving the views less diverse and less interesting. The visual character of the project will be mostly compatible with the existing corridor. The change in visual character will be categorized as low.

Visual Quality

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the project corridor. The project will minimally impact the visual quality of the existing corridor. The landscape in the project corridor is memorable. The trees contrast with the other vegetation in both color and form. The rural landscape is relatively intact. While the grazed lands are not “natural,” the open views and lack of urban elements contribute to the natural character. The residential and commercial properties retain a rural look. The roadway corridor has unity because there is very little to disrupt the visual patterns of the foothill landscape. The buildings are low and rural, making them cohesive with the rolling terrain. Other than the taller hills and mountains, the trees are the tallest element. The occasional windmill does not compete for attention. The removal of trees from the project corridor will have some harmful effects by leaving the landscape less intact. Nevertheless, the level of change in visual quality will be categorized as low.

Resource Change

The removal of seven trees from the project corridor will leave the landscape less diverse, less interesting, and less intact; consequently, the overall resource change will be moderate.

Viewers and Viewer Response

The population affected by the project is composed of viewers. There are two major types of viewer groups for highway projects: highway neighbors and highway users. The project has residential, retail, commercial, civic, and agricultural highway neighbors. The project has local and tourist highway users.

Viewer response is a measure or prediction of the viewer’s reaction to changes in the visual environment and has two dimensions—viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity.

Viewer Exposure

Viewer exposure is a measure of a viewer's ability to see a particular object. Viewer exposure has three attributes: location, quantity, and duration. Highway neighbors with views of the road include residents, users of agricultural properties, and those using retail, commercial, and civic facilities; these neighbors have a close view of the roadway. The density of the neighbors along the route is low, and the area population is less than 4,000 people. Therefore, the quantity of neighbors viewing the roadway is low. Neighbor viewers to the route would have a long exposure to the views and many opportunities to see the views. Their view of the roadway is also a close view.

Roadway users have a close view of the roadway features with views of the Sierra Nevada foothills in the distance. For the location attribute of viewer exposure, most viewers would fall into the moderate to high exposure category. The views are equally divided between the immediate edges of the roadway and views farther off. State Route 180—the main road into the Sequoia National Forest and Kings Canyon National Park—is heavily traveled. The views from the roadway would be seen by many highway users. Overall, the quantity of viewer exposure will be moderate.

The overall exposure for viewers from the highway is moderate. The overall exposure for viewers to the highway is moderate.

Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity is a measure of the viewer's recognition of a particular object; it has three attributes: activity, awareness, and local values. The viewers on this roadway are likely to be engaged in sightseeing. The larger volume of traffic would come from outside of the area as people travel to recreational areas. Residents of the area choose to live here partly for the scenery. Viewer awareness is moderate to high, with a narrow focus and specific view. Local values include the importance of open space preservation.

The activity and awareness of viewers to and from the roadway will result in moderate to high sensitivity. The local value of open space preservation and the status of State Route 180 as a State Scenic Highway will create a high level of sensitivity.

The narrative descriptions of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity for each viewer group were merged to establish the overall viewer response of each group. The overall sensitivity of viewers to the highway will be moderate, and the overall sensitivity of viewers from the highway will be moderate.

Visual Impact

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes.

Because it is not feasible to analyze all the views in which the project would be seen, three key views associated with visual assessment units that would most clearly demonstrate the change in the project's visual resources were chosen. Each of these key views can be found below in Figures 2-1, 2-2, and 2-3.

Figure 2-1 Key View 1, Post Mile 89.48



Key View 1, Post Mile 89.48—From near George Smith Road, looking northeast. The expected level of change to this view will be low. Few to no trees will be removed, and the view will be relatively intact. Viewer exposure will be moderate, and viewer sensitivity will be moderate to high. The overall level of viewer response will be moderate to high.

Figure 2-2 Key View 2, Post Mile 90.21



Key View 2, Post Mile 90.21—Looking northeast. The expected level of change to this view will be low. The tree on the right-hand side of the view is proposed for removal, which can change the view. Viewer exposure will be moderate, and viewer sensitivity will be moderate to high. The overall level of viewer response will be moderate to high.

Figure 2-3 Key View 3, Post Mile 90.51



Key View 3, Post Mile 90.51—From near Elwood Road, looking southwest. The expected level of change to this view will be low. No trees will be removed from this view, and the view will be intact. Viewer exposure will be moderate, and viewer sensitivity will be high. The overall level of viewer response will be moderate to high.

Project Visual Impact Summary

The overall visual impact of the project will be moderate.

Table 2.1 below summarizes and compares the narrative ratings for visual resource change, viewer response, and visual impacts between alternatives for each key view.

Table 2.1 Summary of Key View Narrative Ratings

Key View	Resource Change	Viewer Response	Visual Impact
Key View 1	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate
Key View 2	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate
Key View 3	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate

Resource change will be low, and the project improvements will be within local aesthetic values and goals. The overall viewer sensitivity of neighbors

and users is expected to be moderate to high. Before mitigation, visual impacts caused by this project are expected to be moderate. Any trees removed for the project will be replaced with mitigation planting, which is in line with Caltrans policy. After mitigation, visual impacts caused by this project are expected to be low.

The project will have no impact on scenic vistas. The project will have no permanent impact on scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway. The project will have a low impact on the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings. The project will have no impact on the creation of a new source of light or glare.

Temporary Construction-Related Impacts

Temporary visual impacts may occur during project construction. Equipment and materials will need to be stored during construction. There may be a temporary increase in light and glare if night work is required. These visual impacts are expected to be temporary and have less than substantial impacts.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following measure to avoid or minimize visual impacts will be incorporated into the project:

- Minimize tree removal—Remove only those trees and shrubs required for the construction of the new roadway facilities. Avoid removing trees and shrubs for temporary uses, such as construction staging areas or temporary stormwater conveyance systems.

The following mitigation measure to offset visual impacts will be incorporated into the project:

- Replacement planting for vegetation removed or damaged by the project—The project will remove seven existing oak trees. Per Caltrans standards, trees removed for highway improvements must be replaced at a minimum 1-to-1 ratio. It is expected that replacement planting will deliver a 1-to-5 ratio or 35 new trees. To achieve this replanting ratio, additional trees will be planted within the suitable existing right-of-way. If necessary, additional planting can take place within Caltrans' right-of-way outside the project limits or through partnerships with other organizations. The trees will be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species.
- [The following measure has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Replacement planting will be accompanied by a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan, which will include monitoring and maintenance to ensure a 70 percent minimum survival rate after five years.

2.1.2 Agriculture and Forest Resources

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state’s inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment Project; and the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

The project will not acquire additional right-of-way and will not convert prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance to nonagricultural use or conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract. There are no forest lands or timberlands within the project area that could be impacted. Considering the information available on the Fresno County Geographic Information System webpage accessed on February 16, 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use?	No Impact
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	No Impact
c) Conflict with existing zoning, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	No Impact
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Agriculture and Forest Resources
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	No Impact

2.1.3 Air Quality

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Considering the information in the Air Quality Memorandum dated March 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Air Quality
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	No Impact
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	No Impact
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	No Impact
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	No Impact

2.1.4 Biological Resources

Considering the information in the Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts) dated February 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Biological Resources
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries?	No Impact
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	Less Than Significant Impact
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	No Impact
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	No Impact
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	No Impact

Affected Environment

The Biological Study Area is defined as the action area. The action area is the area to be directly affected by the project, plus the nearby areas to be indirectly affected by the project. Based on the disturbance footprint associated with the conversion of previously unpaved right-of-way to a paved roadway, a 150-foot buffer on either side of the road from the centerline of the project was deemed appropriate. The action area studied for this project encompasses about 38 contiguous acres.

A list of federally endangered species and critical habitats that may be affected by the project was first requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on November 18, 2020, and was updated on February 23, 2022. In-office research (California Native Plant Society, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and field surveys were conducted by Caltrans biologists for the project. [The following text has been updated since the draft environmental document was circulated.] A letter of concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was received on July 20, 2022.

Drainage, botanical, habitat, and general wildlife surveys were performed during four site visits on December 12, 2019, December 21, 2020, April 5, 2021, and May 7, 2021, respectively. No listed species were seen during the surveys.

Natural Communities

Habitats and natural communities of special concern that will potentially be affected by the implementation of the project include oak woodland and oak savanna.

Oak woodlands are described as a 5-acre circular area containing five or more oak trees per acre, containing blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*). Oak woodlands and savannas are differentiated by canopy cover, with oak woodlands having a moderately closed canopy and generally open understory and oak savannas having a mostly open canopy, containing intermittent oaks and a predominantly grassland understory. Oak savannas can be found throughout most oak woodland habitats and are generally established and maintained through disturbances, poor soils, or precipitation patterns.

Disturbed oak savanna is the predominant undeveloped habitat type within the action area, including a small component of oak woodland edge habitat primarily composed of blue oak and interior live oak.

Wetlands and Other Waters

The action area has one drainage deemed a “blue line” by the National Wetlands Inventory. It is a seasonally flooded, intermittent streambed and contains only water during the wet, cool, and rainy season. This unnamed drainage runs under State Route 180 via a corrugated metal culvert near the Squaw Valley Motel.

The action area includes four potential jurisdictional drainages. The drainages proposed for extension under the project are expected to fall under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The four drainages are ephemeral in nature, containing water only immediately following a rain event and while draining runoff from the nearby Bear Mountain.

Plant Species

Eight species of special concern identified in species queries were found to have historical records of occurrence or potentially suitable habitat within the action area. No special-status plants were seen within the action area during surveys. Given the age and distance of historical observations in the project vicinity, five of the eight species of special concern—forked hareleaf (*Lagophylla dichotoma*), King’s River buckwheat (*Eriogonum nudum* var. *regirivum*), King’s River monkeyflower (*Erythranthe acutidens*), Madera leptosiphon (*Leptosiphon serrulatus*), and Winter’s sunflower (*Helianthus winteri*)—are not expected to occur within the action area or have a very low potential to occur within the action area. The remaining three species are discussed below.

Slender Clarkia

Slender clarkia (*Clarkia exilis*) is endemic to California’s southern Sierra Nevada foothills and Tehachapi Mountains, ranging from Fresno to Kern Counties and typically occurring in cismontane foothill woodlands. The slender clarkia has a 4.3 California Rare Plant Rank, which means it has limited distribution but may be locally common and somewhat threatened in California.

Because it is ranked 4.3 and the fact that it has no federal or state listing status, observations of slender clarkia are not recorded in the California Natural Diversity Database. Observations are recorded on Calflora, primarily in the more southern Sierra Nevada foothills, with the closest observation recorded on a quadrant checklist (indicating the species occurred within the quadrant but without specific location information) for the Pine Flat Dam U.S. Geological Survey quadrant. Foothill oak woodlands are present within the action area; however, this species was not seen during botanical surveys. Due to the locally common nature of this species, a moderate potential exists for this species to occur on this project.

Spiny-Sepaled Button Celery

Spiny-sepaled button celery (*Eryngium spinosepalum*) is endemic to California’s San Joaquin Valley and southern Sierra Nevada foothills, typically occurring in northern hardpan and claypan vernal pools and, less commonly, roadside ditches, depressions, and swales in annual grasslands. It is often associated with upland grasses and oak woodland. The spiny-sepaled button celery has a 1B.2 California Rare Plant Rank, which indicates that it is rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere with a moderate degree of threat or immediacy.

A historic (1937) observation with a 1-mile degree of accuracy was recorded overlapping the action area; however, subsequent surveys in 1992 failed to locate the species or high-quality habitat within the action area. The original observations were recorded only as “north of Tucker Mountain” and are likely located several miles south of the action area. Calflora reported two

observations within the action area from 1937 at a location that has been subsequently developed into a residential parcel, as well as nonspecific observations within the quad in 2019. This species was not seen during botanical surveys, and low-lying drainages in the vicinity are outside of the project footprint. However, given the lack of rain during the survey year and roadside drainages that may retain more moisture during a heavy rain year, this species has low potential to occur within the action area.

Streambank Spring Beauty

Streambank spring beauty (*Claytonia parviflora* ssp. *grandiflora*) is distributed throughout California's Sierra Nevada foothills, occurring in vernal moist, often disturbed sites in foothill woodland. Streambank spring beauty has a 4.2 California Rare Plant Rank, which means it has a limited distribution but may be locally common and is moderately threatened in California.

Because of its 4.2 rank and the fact that it has no federal or state listing status, observations of streambank spring beauty are not recorded in the California Natural Diversity Database. General checklist observations with less precise locational data are recorded on Calflora outside of the project limits and within nearby northern quads. While foothill woodland and seasonally, ephemeral wet drainages are present throughout the action area, this species was not seen during botanical surveys. Due to the lack of observations and the species' affinity for disturbance, a moderate potential exists for this species to occur on this project.

Animal Species

Three species of special concern identified in species queries were found to have historic records of occurrence or potentially suitable habitats within the action area. No special-status species were seen within the action area during surveys. Given the age and distance of historic observations, as well as limited suitable habitats in the project vicinity, two of these species—Crotch's bumblebee and western spadefoot toad—are not expected to occur within the action area. The remaining species—the California tiger salamander—is discussed below.

California Tiger Salamander

The California tiger salamander is a federally and state threatened species and is on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's watch list. California tiger salamanders live in annual grasslands and open woodlands. They occupy burrows typically created by California ground squirrels and pocket gophers and require vernal pools or ponds for breeding within 1.2 miles of the burrows. California tiger salamanders use burrow systems year-round but mainly during the dry months when they enter estivation (a dormant state). Areas surrounding the breeding pools are usually dominated by grassland, oak savanna, or oak woodland.

No California tiger salamanders were seen during a reconnaissance-level site visit; however, the visit occurred outside of rain events during a dry year, and salamanders would have likely remained below ground. Potential low-quality upland habitat is present within the action area. Potential breeding habitat is not present within the action area but may be present within 1.2 miles of the action area. There are several observations between 2.5 miles and 7.7 miles from the action area, but the observations are dated 1974 and 1992. According to the California Natural Diversity Database, accessed in 2021, the most recent observation is from 2017 and is about 7 miles from the action area. Given the disturbing nature of the action area, the ages and locations of sightings in the vicinity, and the occasionally appropriate nature of stock ponds within the required distance, a low potential exists for the California tiger salamander to occur within the action area.

Environmental Consequences

Natural Communities

Expected impacts to oak savannas and woodlands will be minimal. Most vegetation disturbances will be limited to the ruderal and herbaceous annual species, which are typically present along road margins. Permanent impacts from the paving of previously permeable surfaces will primarily occur on already compacted, disturbed road shoulders. Temporary impacts to annual herbaceous oak savanna understory from excavation and fill are expected to recover within one season.

The removal of seven blue oaks is expected, with potential root damage occurring to two additional blue oaks. Of these, two trees to be removed (measuring 70 total inches in diameter at breast height) fall within a jurisdictional channel. The remaining seven, about 12 inches to 20 inches in diameter at breast height, are upland and associated with regularly maintained disturbed grassland understory or regularly maintained and compacted driveways and developments.

Wetlands and Other Waters

The extension of the cross-roadway culverts serving jurisdictional drainages will be necessary to accommodate the widened road. Culvert extension work will result in impacts to waterways due to soil disturbance and the excavation of the culvert trench. The project will not result in diminished streamflow capacity or altered flow patterns.

It is expected that mitigation credits and in-lieu fees for permanent impacts via conversion of previously permeable channel surfaces to roadway-covered culverts will be purchased for this project.

Permanent impacts to vegetation within the channel from the removal of one large, multi-boled blue oak (a blue oak with more than one trunk) with a diameter at breast height of about 43 inches within a jurisdictional channel are

expected. It is expected that removing the tree will be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio. If further permanent removal of woody vegetation within channels is identified during the project design phase or construction, further replacement planting mitigation will be required for this project.

The project will require a 1602 Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement, 404 Clean Water Act permit, and a 401 or Waste Discharge Requirement permit for waters of the U.S.

Plant Species

The southern expansion of the roadway is expected to result in relatively minor impacts to natural vegetation communities. Widening the roadway will require converting previously permeable surfaces to a paved roadway. This will primarily result in permanent impacts to the most disturbed and regularly compacted portions of the right-of-way that are unlikely to provide habitat or support special-status plant species. Temporarily impacted areas will be expected to recover ground vegetation within one to two seasons postconstruction. No special-status plants were seen during surveys. Given these factors, no direct or indirect impacts to special-status plant species are expected as a result of this project.

Vegetation impacts will be limited primarily to clearing herbaceous materials, removing seven trees, and potential root damage to two others. Mitigation for removing a blue oak in a jurisdictional channel via onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio is expected, resulting in an overall increase in the number of blue oaks within the action area.

Animal Species

California Tiger Salamander

Impacts to California tiger salamander upland or aquatic habitats are not expected. Upland habitat is characterized as any potential area where small mammal burrows may occur and within range of potential breeding habitat. Although a limited number of small mammal burrows were seen onsite, the area is frequently disturbed. Overall permanent impacts to poor quality habitat are expected to be less than 1 acre and within 6 feet to 7 feet of existing shoulder backing and road shoulders. Considering the quality of upland habitat, lack of recorded observations in the vicinity of the action area, and the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures, it was determined the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the California tiger salamander.

Migratory Birds

Caltrans Standard Specifications for bird protections (including active nesting bird buffers, seasonal restrictions, and preconstruction surveys) will be used to maintain compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. California Fish and

Game Code Sections 3503, 3503.5 (protection of birds' nests), and 3513 (taking Migratory Bird Treaty Act birds) will be enforced throughout the project.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

The following avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures are expected:

Natural Communities and Wetlands and Other Waters

- The removal of a large, multi-boled blue oak tree with a diameter at breast height of 43 inches will be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio.
- [The following measure has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Replacement planting will be accompanied by a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan, which will include monitoring and maintenance to ensure a 70 percent minimum survival rate after five years.
- Mitigation via in-lieu fees for temporary and permanent impacts to less than 0.10 acre of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jurisdictional waterways are expected.

Plant Species

- Focused botanical preconstruction surveys will be performed the flowering season before work at all worksites where ground disturbance is expected and suitable habitat for listed species exists.
- If populations of special-status plants are discovered in proximity to worksites, populations will be delineated and protected by an environmentally sensitive area buffer, clearly designated by high visibility fencing or flagging.
- For any flowering populations of special-status perennial plants discovered within a worksite, a replanting plan will be established, and plants will be relocated as close to their original location as feasibly possible. Special-status annual plants will be avoided as feasible until seed set and senescence have occurred, then topsoil will be saved and replaced as described below. For state and federally listed plant species, Caltrans will coordinate further actions with the appropriate agency.
- For worksites where construction will begin after the flowering period, if special-status plant populations are discovered in the worksite, the topsoil will be removed and stored safely near the work area; it will be replaced after construction is finished to maintain the existing seed bank and ensure the continued growth of that population.

Animal Species

- A qualified biologist will conduct worker environmental awareness training for all work personnel to inform them of the special-status species potentially within the work area, protective measures, reporting

procedures, and consequences of violating environmental laws and permit requirements.

- A biological monitor will be present to monitor areas where small mammal burrows are present during initial groundbreaking activities.
- If significant rainfall occurs during a 24-hour period, all covered work activities will stop until it is no longer raining, and no further rain is forecast within 24 hours. A biological monitor will survey areas with standing water within the project footprint before resuming work. Exclusion fencing will be installed where potential habitat exists next to the right-of-way.
- Caltrans Standard Specifications requiring work lights to be directed only at the work area will be enforced throughout the project.
- For work conducted during the California tiger salamander migration season (November 1 to May 31), a qualified biologist will survey the active work areas (including access roads) in the mornings following measurable precipitation. Construction may start once the biologist has confirmed that no California tiger salamanders are in the work area.
- Seasonally appropriate preconstruction surveys will be performed to ensure that no Crotch's bumblebee is present in the action area.

After receiving the Letter of Concurrence on July 20, 2022, the following measures regarding the California tiger salamander have been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.

California Tiger Salamander

- A qualified biologist will conduct a preconstruction visual survey of the project site no more than 14 days before the beginning of ground disturbance or construction activities. In the unlikely event that the species is detected, Caltrans will contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss how to proceed and the potential initiation of formal consultation.
- A Caltrans biologist will survey and approve staging and storage areas for use before construction starts. These areas will be delineated by fencing or flagging.
- Before the start of work or ground disturbance, a qualified biologist will provide worker environmental awareness training for all construction personnel, including contractors, subcontractors, and contractors' representatives, covering the status of the California tiger salamander; how to identify the species and its habitat; the importance of avoiding impacts to the species; the laws that protect it; and what to do if an individual is encountered during construction. New construction personnel who are added to the project after the training is first conducted will also be required to take the training. Caltrans will keep documentation of the

training on file, including sign-in sheets, and will make these available to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service upon request.

- Caltrans will install ERTEC temporary fencing (a high-visibility, nonpermeable exclusionary fencing) along the entire eastbound segment of State Route 180 to prevent the species from entering the work areas from nearby uplands.
- A qualified biologist will be present onsite to monitor for the species during initial ground-disturbing activities, with a focus on areas where small mammal burrows are present. When not onsite, the biologist will be available on-call if the species is seen either onsite or near the project footprint.
- No construction activities will be conducted in upland areas where migrating California tiger salamanders may occur if: (1) it is raining, (2) there is a greater than 70 percent chance of rain based on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service forecast on any given workday, or (3) a rain event greater than 0.25 inch has occurred within the past 48 hours. Before resuming work following a rain event, a qualified biologist will conduct a new preconstruction visual survey of the work area to confirm that no California tiger salamanders are present.
- An Emergency Spill Prevention Plan will be prepared that includes measures to prevent fluids and other materials (e.g., oils, transmission and hydraulic fluids, and fuel) from entering waterways and sensitive upland habitats.
- All construction pipes or similar structures with openings that are stored on the construction site overnight will be inspected thoroughly for the species before capping, installing, burying, moving, or otherwise using the structures to ensure that animals have not taken refuge inside. The same applies to all cover objects stored onsite. If an individual is discovered during this inspection, the Caltrans biologist will be notified, and the structure or object will not be disturbed until the individual voluntarily leaves.
- To prevent the inadvertent entrapment of the California tiger salamander or other wildlife during project construction, all excavated, steep-walled openings (e.g., holes, basins, trenches) more than 6 inches deep will be covered at the close of each working day by plywood or similar materials or provided with one or more escape ramps constructed of earth fill or planks. These will be checked daily for trapped individuals. Before any such openings are filled, they will be inspected thoroughly for trapped wildlife. If at any time a trapped or injured species is discovered, Caltrans will stop work immediately and contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The use of temporary artificial lighting at night will be limited, except when necessary for construction or driver and pedestrian safety. Any artificial lighting used during construction will be confined to areas within the

construction footprint and directed away from surrounding sensitive habitats. Caltrans will limit the non-target casting of light by using shielding around the light source to further confine the illumination.

- All food-related trash items, such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps, will be disposed of in closed, secured containers and removed daily from the project site to prevent attracting predator species.
- All project-related vehicles will observe a daytime speed of no more than 20 miles per hour and a nighttime speed of no more than 10 miles per hour in all project areas beyond the paved highway. Vehicle travel will be limited to established roadways unless otherwise designated. Project personnel will be provided with guidance on vehicle use and speed limits.
- Following project completion, Caltrans will conduct erosion control in disturbed areas by hydroseeding with a native seed mix and hydromulching.

2.1.5 Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historic Property Survey Report dated January 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Cultural Resources
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	No Impact
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	No Impact

2.1.6 Energy

Considering the information in the Energy Memorandum dated February 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during project construction or operation?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Energy
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	No Impact

2.1.7 Geology and Soils

Considering the information in the California Department of Conservation Map Data Viewer webpage accessed February 2022 and a Paleontological Identification Report dated December 2020, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. 	No Impact
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	No Impact
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	No Impact
iv) Landslides?	No Impact
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	No Impact
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in onsite or offsite landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	No Impact
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Geology and Soils
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	No Impact
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	No Impact

2.1.8 Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Considering the information in the Caltrans Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Memorandum dated March 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Greenhouse Gas Emissions
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	Less Than Significant Impact
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	Less Than Significant Impact

Affected Environment

The project is in a small, rural community. State Route 180 is the main transportation route to and through the area for both passenger and commercial vehicles. The nearest alternate route is State Route 63, 1.5 miles west of the project area.

The project is within the jurisdiction of the Fresno Council of Governments. The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan, Chapter 3—Sustainable Communities Strategy: People, Choices, Community, identifies that the plan will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by focusing on growth in developed areas, moderately increasing residential densities, encouraging infill development, protecting open space and agricultural land, and providing transportation alternatives to the private automobile.

Environmental Consequences

Greenhouse gas emissions impacts on non-capacity-increasing projects like the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization project are considered less than significant under CEQA because there will be no increase in operational emissions.

However, construction equipment, traffic delays, material processing, and delivery may generate short-term greenhouse gas emissions during construction. Carbon dioxide emissions generated from construction equipment were estimated using the Caltrans Construction Emissions Tool v1.1. The estimated emissions will be 89 tons of carbon dioxide per 60 working days.

While some construction greenhouse gas emissions will be unavoidable, implementing standard conditions or Best Management Practices designed to reduce or eliminate emissions as part of the project will reduce impacts to less than significant.

Avoidance, Minimization, and/or Mitigation Measures

Caltrans Standard Specifications Section 14.9.02, Air Pollution Control, requires contractors to comply with all air pollution control rules, regulations, ordinances, and statutes. Measures that reduce construction vehicle emissions also help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Project-Level Measures To Be Implemented To Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions Related to Construction Activities:

- Schedule truck trips outside of peak morning and evening commute hours. The project's Transportation Management Plan will address this during the design phase.
- Reduce construction waste. This will be a part of the project contract and will require a Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling Report and a Recycled Materials Report demonstrating efforts to minimize landfill material.
- Reduce the need for the transport of earthen materials by balancing cut and fill quantities. This will be addressed during the project's design phase.
- Construction scheduling: Lengthen the lane closure duration to reduce necessary mobilization efforts. The project's Transportation Management Plan will address this during the design phase.

Project-Level Measures To Be Implemented To Reduce Operational Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

- Design and installation of long-life pavement structures to minimize life-cycle costs.
- Design that matches the existing grade as much as possible to reduce earthwork.
- Incorporating native plants and vegetation (replacing more vegetation than was removed) into the project design to increase carbon sequestration.
- Avoid, through a combination of preservation and new planting, an ultimate loss of tree canopy within the project limits. Or, if the overall

available planting area has been reduced, compensate for trees lost to the extent possible with trees, either onsite or offsite.

- Minimize tree removal—Remove only those trees and shrubs required for the construction of the new roadway facilities. Avoid removing trees and shrubs for temporary uses, such as construction staging areas or temporary stormwater conveyance systems.
- Replacement planting for vegetation removed or damaged by the project—The project will remove seven existing oak trees. Per Caltrans’ standard, trees removed for highway improvements must be replaced at a minimum 1-to-1 ratio. It is expected that replacement planting will deliver a 1-to-5 ratio or 35 new trees. To achieve this replanting ratio, additional trees will be planted within the suitable existing right-of-way. If necessary, additional planting can take place within Caltrans’ right-of-way outside the project limits or through partnerships with other organizations. The trees will be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species.

2.1.9 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Considering the information in the Hazardous Waste Compliance Memorandum dated February 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	No Impact
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	No Impact
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hazards and Hazardous Materials
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	No Impact
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	No Impact
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	No Impact

2.1.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

Considering the information in the Water Compliance Memorandum dated October 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface water or groundwater quality?	No Impact
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Hydrology and Water Quality
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would: (i) result in substantial erosion or siltation onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding onsite or offsite;	No Impact
(iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	No Impact
(iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	No Impact
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	No Impact
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	No Impact

2.1.11 Land Use and Planning

The project will not physically divide an established community and will not conflict with the Fresno County General Plan or any other policy or regulation meant to avoid or mitigate an environmental effect. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Land Use and Planning
a) Physically divide an established community?	No Impact
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	No Impact

2.1.12 Mineral Resources

Considering the information on the California Department of Conservation Online Mineral Land Classification Interactive Map accessed in February 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mineral Resources
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	No Impact
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	No Impact

2.1.13 Noise

Considering the information in the Noise Compliance Memorandum dated November 2021, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project result in:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Noise
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	No Impact
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?	No Impact
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	No Impact

2.1.14 Population and Housing

The project will add a safety improvement to an existing roadway and will not directly or indirectly induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area. The project will not acquire additional right-of-way, and no person or

business will be relocated or displaced. Considering the scope and location of the project within a rural setting, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Population and Housing
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	No Impact
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	No Impact

2.1.15 Public Services

The project will add a safety improvement to an existing roadway and will not trigger the need for new or modified public services. Considering the scope and location of the project in a rural setting, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Public Services
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services: Fire protection?	No Impact
Police protection?	No Impact
Schools?	No Impact
Parks?	No Impact
Other public facilities?	No Impact

2.1.16 Recreation

The project will add a safety improvement to an existing roadway. No parks or recreational facilities are within proximity of the project area. Furthermore, the project does not include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Considering this information, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Recreation
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	No Impact
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	No Impact

2.1.17 Transportation

The project will add a safety improvement to an existing roadway. The project will not conflict with any transportation program, plan, ordinance, or policy and will have no impact on vehicle miles traveled. The project will not increase hazards due to a geometric design feature or incompatible uses and will not result in inadequate emergency access. This project was exempt from vehicle miles traveled analysis under Senate Bill 743 because the project will not likely lead to a substantial or measurable increase in roadway capacity, according to the California Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, 2018 Technical Advisory. Considering this, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	No Impact
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Transportation
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	No Impact
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	No Impact

2.1.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

Considering the information in the Historic Property Survey Report dated January 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Tribal Cultural Resources
a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or	No Impact
b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	No Impact

2.1.19 Utilities and Service Systems

Considering the project will not create a demand for new or expanded utilities and service systems and have no impact on a utility or service system supply or generate solid waste in excess as described in “d” below, the following significance determinations have been made:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Utilities and Service Systems
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or stormwater drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	No Impact
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	No Impact
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project’s projected demand in addition to the provider’s existing commitments?	No Impact
d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	No Impact
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	No Impact

2.1.20 Wildfire

The project is not within or near areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. Considering the information from the Fire Hazard Severity Zone map from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection accessed in February 2022, the following significance determinations have been made:

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones:

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	No Impact

Question—Would the project:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Wildfire
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	No Impact
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	No Impact
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	No Impact

2.1.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	No Impact
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	No Impact

Question:	CEQA Significance Determinations for Mandatory Findings of Significance
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	No Impact

Appendix A Title VI Policy Statement

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

Govin Newsom, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
P.O. BOX 942873, MS-49
SACRAMENTO, CA 94273-0001
PHONE (916) 654-6130
FAX (916) 653-5776
TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov



Making Conservation
a California Way of Life.

September 2021

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

The California Department of Transportation, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, ensures *"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."*

Caltrans will make every effort to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its services, programs and activities, whether they are federally funded or not, and that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, color, or national origin. In addition, Caltrans will facilitate meaningful participation in the transportation planning process in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Related federal statutes, remedies, and state law further those protections to include sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and age.

For information or guidance on how to file a complaint, or obtain more information regarding Title VI, please contact the Title VI Branch Manager at (916) 324-8379 or visit the following web page:
<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/civil-rights/title-vi>.

To obtain this information in an alternate format such as Braille or in a language other than English, please contact the California Department of Transportation, Office of Civil Rights, at 1823 14th Street, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 95811; PO Box 942874, MS-79, Sacramento, CA 94274-0001; (916) 324-8379 (TTY 711); or at Title.VI@dot.ca.gov.

A blue ink signature of Toks Omishakin, consisting of stylized cursive letters.

Toks Omishakin
Director

"Provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all people and respects the environment."

Appendix B Comment Letters and Responses

[Appendix B has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] This appendix contains the comments received during the public circulation and comment period from June 30, 2022, to July 31, 2022, retyped for readability. The comment letters are stated verbatim as submitted, with acronyms, abbreviations, and any original grammatical or typographical errors included. A Caltrans response follows each comment presented. Copies of the original comment letters and documents can be found in Volume 2 of this document.

A public notice in English and Spanish was posted in the Mid Valley Times on June 30, 2022, and in the S.O.S. newsletter on July 2, 2022. It stated the public review and comment period for the draft environmental document would run from June 30, 2022, to July 31, 2022, and a public hearing was held on July 27, 2022.

Many commenters requested a reduction in the speed limit. Those commenters will be referred to the following answer:

The posted speed limit for State Route 180 within the segment from George Smith Road to Indian Guide Road is 55 miles per hour, which is consistent with the standard speed limit for two-lane undivided highways. California Vehicle Code 22349b VC makes 55 miles per hour the default speed limit on two-lane, undivided highways unless a higher or lower speed limit is posted.

Caltrans follows the practice of using an engineering and traffic survey for any reduction below a statutory 55 miles per hour speed limit. Speed limits set by an engineering and traffic survey are normally set near the 85th percentile speed. The 85th percentile speed is the speed at (or below) which 85 percent of the traffic is moving. Federal studies on the effects of establishing, raising, and lowering speed limits demonstrate that setting the posted speed too high above or too low below the 85th percentile speed can increase collisions. Speed limits that are set near the 85th percentile speed of free-flowing traffic are safer and produce less variance in vehicle speeds.

An engineering speed survey was performed on State Route 180 at multiple locations that overlap a portion of the study segment. The highway segment encompassed by the engineering speed survey included the portion of the study segment from the intersection at George Smith Road to a location just west of the Bear Mountain Pizza establishment. Destinations in the portion of the study segment within the engineering speed survey include the Mountain Valley Community Church, the Fresno County Sheriff's Office, the Bear Mountain Library, the U.S. Post Office, and the Squaw Valley Trading Center. The results of the engineering speed survey indicate that the 85th percentile

speed for all locations surveyed is within 5 miles per hour of the established 55 miles per hour speed limit and thus supports maintaining the existing speed limit throughout the study segment.

The two-way left-turn lane proposed by this project is intended to provide a refuge for slower vehicles turning left into or out of driveways by separating them from faster vehicles traveling through the project area.

Comment from Betsy Wegner

Comment 1:

From: David Wegner <dawags5@yahoo.com>
Date: July 26, 2022 at 8:15:15 PM PDT
To: "Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT" <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: two-way left turn lane - state route180 in Squaw Valley

Hello Jennifer,

As a resident of Squaw Valley I want to make a comment on the proposed two-way turn lane on State Route 180. My husband and I retired to this community in 2010 because we were very attracted to the rural setting provided by the lack of city structure and the country atmosphere. The more our roadways are treated like a city the less desirable our community becomes. This however is not our main concern. Speeding is. Although I understand that this proposed plan is powered by safety, I feel that changing the speed limit from 55 to 30-35mph would be much more effective than a turn lane. Motorists consistently top speeds of 70 mph on State Route 180. At these speeds collisions are still a threat whether a turn lane is constructed or not. Please consider concentrating on getting people to slow down especially on this stretch from George Smith Road to Elwood Road where the largest concentration of businesses lie and most turns are taken.

Thank you.
Respectfully, Betsy Wegner
559.999.1446

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in this project and for providing your comments. Please refer to the first two pages in Appendix B of this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Bryan Fulgham

Comment 1:

From: Bryan Fulgham <sdfolge@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, July 15, 2022 11:53 AM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Project title: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Please provide the following information in your request: Project title:
State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization
General location information: On State Route 180 between 0.4 mile east of
George Smith Road and Elwood Road
District number-county code-route-post mile: 06-FRE-180-PM 89.6 to 90.7
Project ID number: 0620000037

Greetings Ms. Jennifer H. Taylor

On behalf of Hummingbird Investments of WA LLC, we hereby request a copy of the Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2) for the above referenced project. Electronic format is preferable.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
Bryan Fulgham
760.533.4630

Response to comment 1:

On Jul 18, 2022, at 1:19 PM, Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov> wrote:

Mr. Fulgham,

I forwarded your email to Chelsea Starr, the planner on the project. Chelsea has been out of the office for a few days, but will be returning tomorrow. I'm sure she will respond to your request for the technical studies tomorrow. In the meantime, I will see if I can find an electronic copy of Volume 2.

Jennifer
Jennifer H. Taylor
District 6 - Environmental Office Chief
Office – 559-230-3101
Cell – 559-287-9844
<https://cadot.webex.com/meet/jennifer.taylor>

Comment 2:

From: Bryan Fulgham <sdfolge@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 18, 2022 5:05 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Re: Project title: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Thank you!

Sent from my iPad

Response to comment 2:

On Jul 19, 2022, at 6:18 PM, Starr, Chelsea@DOT
<Chelsea.Starr@dot.ca.gov> wrote:

Good Afternoon Mr. Fulgham,

Thank you for your interest in the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization project.

The requested Technical Studies for the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared for this project will be sent to you in a series of emails due to attachment file size limitations.

This is email 1, and includes the following attachments:

1. Hazardous Waste Compliance Memorandum
2. Air Quality Memorandum
3. Air Quality Checklist
4. Climate Change Report
5. Energy Memorandum
6. Historic Property Survey Report

If you would prefer a hard copy, please let me know.

Thank you,
Chelsea Starr
Acting Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans District 6
Fresno, CA 93726
Cell: 559-383-5432

On Jul 19, 2022, at 6:22 PM, Starr, Chelsea@DOT
<Chelsea.Starr@dot.ca.gov> wrote:

Good Afternoon Mr. Fulgham,

This is email 2 of 2, and includes the following attachments:

1. Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts)
2. Noise Compliance Memorandum
3. Paleontological Identification Report
4. Visual Impact Assessment
5. Water Compliance Memorandum

If you would prefer a hard copy, please let me know.

Thank you,
Chelsea Starr
Acting Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans District 6
Fresno, CA 93726
Cell: 559-383-5432

Comment 3:

From: Bryan Fulgham <sdfolge@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 20, 2022 8:03 PM
To: Starr, Chelsea@DOT <Chelsea.Starr@dot.ca.gov>
Cc: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Re: Project title: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Thank you Chelsea. This is perfect.

Regards,
Bryan

Sent from my iPad

Response to comment 3: Thank you for your interest in the project.

Comment from California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks

From: Angela Moskow <amoskow@californiaoaks.org>
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2022 1:33 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Cc: Janet Cobb <jcobb@californiawildlifefoundation.org>
Subject: Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization, 06-FRE-180-PM 89.6-90.7, Project ID 0620000037

Dear Ms. Taylor,

Please find attached and please acknowledge receipt of a letter by California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks on the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization project.

Thank you so much,

Angela

Angela Moskow
California Oaks Information Network Manager
California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks
201 University Avenue
Berth H-43
Berkeley, CA 94710
www.californiaoaks.org
Telephone: (510) 763-0282

Attached letter:

July 28, 2022

Jennifer H. Taylor, Environmental Office Chief
District 6 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

RE: Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization, 06-FRE-180-PM 89.6-90.7, Project ID 0620000037

Transmitted via email: jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov

Dear Ms. Taylor: The California Oaks program of California Wildlife Foundation works to conserve oak ecosystems because of their critical role in sequestering carbon, maintaining healthy watersheds, providing plant and

wildlife habitat, and sustaining cultural values. California Wildlife Foundation/California Oaks (CWF/CO) reviewed the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization, with a focus on impacts of the proposed project to oak trees. The comments below pertain to oak impacts and mitigation, alignment with Fresno County policies and plans for the county's oak resources, and alignment with California State Concurrent Resolution 17—Relative to oak woodlands (Resolution 17).

Fresno County's General Plan's Open Space Element articulates the following goals and associated policies for oaks:

E. FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Goal OS-E

To help protect, restore, and enhance habitats in Fresno County that support fish and wildlife species so that populations are maintained at viable levels.

Policy OS-E.1

The County shall support efforts to avoid the “net” loss of important wildlife habitat where practicable. In cases where habitat loss cannot be avoided, the County shall impose adequate mitigation for the loss of wildlife habitat that is critical to supporting special-status species and/or other valuable or unique wildlife resources. Mitigation shall be at sufficient ratios to replace the function, and value of the habitat that was removed or degraded. Mitigation may be achieved through any combination of creation, restoration, conservation easements, and/or mitigation banking. Conservation easements should include provisions for maintenance and management in perpetuity. The County shall recommend coordination with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures and the concerns of these agencies are adequately addressed. Important habitat and habitat components include nesting, breeding, and foraging areas, important spawning grounds, migratory routes, migratory stopover areas, oak woodlands, vernal pools, wildlife movement corridors, and other unique wildlife habitats (e.g., alkali scrub) critical to protecting and sustaining wildlife populations.

F. VEGETATION

Open Space goal: To preserve and protect the valuable vegetation resources of Fresno County.

Policy OS- F.3 The County shall support the preservation of significant areas of natural vegetation, including, but not limited to, oak woodlands, riparian areas, and vernal pools.

Policy OS- F.4 The County shall ensure that landmark trees are preserved and protected whenever possible.

The Biological Resources chapter (4.9) of the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the 2000 Fresno County General Plan (see: http://www2.co.fresno.ca.us/4510/4360/general_plan/gp_final_eir/eir/bio4-9.pdf) provides analysis of General Plan impacts on Fresno County's oak resources:

4.9-4 Development under the Draft General Plan could result in the loss of heritage or landmark oak trees.

Valley, live, blue, and black oak trees occur across Fresno County in all types of habitat. Oak trees have aesthetic, historic, and habitat values that make them a desirable feature of the landscape for both humans and wildlife. Through the course of development under the Draft General Plan heritage or landmark oak trees could be removed in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Fresno County.

Specifically, blue oak woodland communities throughout the central valley have been subject to development that threatens the long term stability of this habitat type.

The DEIR also discusses the General Plan's landmark tree language and recommended mitigation measures for landmark tree impacts:

Policy OS-F.4 indicates the County's intent to preserve landmark trees, and policy OS- F.10 provides for the protection of oak woodlands. However, these General Plan policies would not fully offset the effect of oak tree removal because the definition of a landmark tree is not provided.

The basis on which a heritage or landmark tree is defined would provide a qualitative guideline for oak tree evaluation. Additionally, oak trees are not protected by any other regulatory agency such as USFWS or CDFG. Therefore, oak tree removal is considered a significant impact.

Mitigation Measures

- a) Fresno County shall define the specifications for landmark trees identification, based on size and health of the trees.
- b) Native oak and other landmark trees shall be replaced on an inch-for-inch basis when tree size exceeds 6 inches in diameter.
- c) A 5-year monitoring plan shall be prepared for all replacement trees, including provisions for maintenance and replacement of trees that do not survive.

When size specification for landmark tree identification are defined, then mitigation requirements can be assessed on a project-by-project basis as

they occur in Fresno County. Oak trees that are removed during project implementation would be replaced in accordance with the tree mitigation ratio and monitored until established so that trees may survive independently of irrigation or other human maintenance. This mitigation would provide a means to replace removed oak trees and ensure no net losses of oaks in the county.

Effective implementation of Draft General Plan policies and the above mitigation measures would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level for development that occurs within the County's jurisdiction.

CWF/CO's review of Fresno County's General Plan policies and the Biological Resources chapter of the DEIR for the General Plan led us to the conclusion that as currently proposed that the No impact determination regarding e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance? (page 18) is not warranted unless the mitigation plan is to replace the oaks that are removed with oaks, to mitigate damage to other oaks impacted by the project, and to utilize a replacement ratio that ensures a minimum of ratio of inch-for-inch as recommended by the DEIR for the General Plan. Page iii of the Initial Study notes: "The trees would be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species." Oak trees meet these criteria and their selection as replacement trees aligns with Fresno General Plan's oak conservation provisions as well as the mitigation measures discussed in the accompanying DEIR. Further, Fresno County's Oak Management Guidelines recommend: Consider replacing trees whose removal during construction was unavoidable.

Lastly Resolution 17 also calls for replacement planting of oaks as articulated below: Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That all state agencies, including, but not limited to, those specified in this measure, having land use planning duties and responsibilities shall, in the performance of those duties and responsibilities and in a manner consistent with their respective duties and responsibilities, undertake to assess and determine the effects of their land use decisions or actions within any oak woodlands containing Blue, Engelmann, Valley, or Coast Live Oak that may be affected by the decisions or actions... Resolved, That those state agencies undertake, in the performance of their duties and responsibilities, to preserve and protect native oak woodlands to the maximum extent feasible and consistent with the performance of their duties and responsibilities, or provide for replacement plantings where Blue, Engelmann, Valley, or Coast Live Oak are removed from oak woodlands.

Page iv of the Initial Study notes: "The removal of a large, multi-boled (more than one trunk) blue oak tree with a diameter at breast height of 43 inches would be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio." Is the 10-1 ratio applied to the 43 inches of tree that is proposed to be removed or simply a requirement that 10 trees replace the tree?

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Janet Cobb
Executive Officer
California Wildlife Foundation
jcobb@californiawildlifefoundation.org

Angela Moskow
Manager
California Oaks Coalition
amoskow@californiaoaks.org

Comment 1:

CWF/CO's review of Fresno County's General Plan policies and the Biological Resources chapter of the DEIR for the General Plan led us to the conclusion that as currently proposed that the No impact determination regarding e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance? (page 18) is not warranted unless the mitigation plan is to replace the oaks that are removed with oaks, to mitigate damage to other oaks impacted by the project, and to utilize a replacement ratio that ensures a minimum of ratio of inch-for-inch as recommended by the DEIR for the General Plan. Page iii of the Initial Study notes: "The trees would be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species." Oak trees meet these criteria and their selection as replacement trees aligns with Fresno General Plan's oak conservation provisions as well as the mitigation measures discussed in the accompanying DEIR. Further, Fresno County's Oak Management Guidelines recommend: Consider replacing trees whose removal during construction was unavoidable.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in this project and for providing your comments. This project will occur within Caltrans' right-of-way and will require the removal of seven oak trees. As detailed in Sections 2.1.1. and 2.1.4, oak tree removal will be mitigated with the following measures:

One oak tree will require the following measures:

- The removal of a large, multi-boled blue oak tree with a diameter at breast height of 43 inches will be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio.
- Replacement planting will be accompanied by a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan, which will include monitoring and maintenance to ensure a 70 percent minimum survival rate after five years.

Six oak trees will require the following measures:

- Per Caltrans standards, trees removed for highway improvements must be replaced at a minimum 1-to-1 ratio. It is expected that replacement planting will deliver a 1-to-5 ratio or 35 new trees. To achieve this replanting ratio, additional trees will be planted within the suitable existing right-of-way. If necessary, additional planting can take place within Caltrans' right-of-way outside the project limits or through partnerships with other organizations. The trees will be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species.

Caltrans will replace the oaks with oak trees of the same species or another native oak species. The project will replace removed oak trees at a ratio that exceeds a 1-to-1 replacement ratio suggested in the Fresno County Oak Management Guidelines. Therefore, this project does not conflict with the Fresno County Oak Management Guidelines listed in the Fresno County General Plan Policy Document.

The draft and final Environmental Impact Report completed for the County of Fresno General Plan Update 2000 addresses impacts to the environment that would occur because of the planned development outlined in the County of Fresno General Plan Update 2000. This project is a transportation safety improvement project on an existing state route within Caltrans' right-of-way and is, therefore, not obligated to follow measures outlined in the draft and final Environmental Impact Report.

However, while the project will not be replacing the removed oak trees on an inch-per-inch basis, the project will exceed the minimum replacement ratio outlined in the Fresno County Oak Management Guidelines and require a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan. For these reasons, this project is not considered in conflict with the draft and final Environmental Impact Report completed for the County of Fresno General Plan Update 2000. The No Impact determinations under Section 2.1.11 Land Use and Planning are considered valid.

Comment 2:

Page iv of the Initial Study notes: "The removal of a large, multi-boled (more than one trunk) blue oak tree with a diameter at breast height of 43 inches would be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio." Is the 10-1 ratio applied to the 43 inches of tree that is proposed to be removed or simply a requirement that 10 trees replace the tree?

Response to comment 2: The replacement ratio of 10-to-1 is applied to only the one large blue oak tree that will be removed from the project area. Ten oak trees will replace the one tree slated for removal.

Comment from Carol Burke

Comment 1:

On July 27 at 4:56 p.m., Carol Burke called Jennifer H. Taylor, Caltrans Environmental Office Chief. A voicemail was left for Jennifer indicating she had nothing negative to say about the proposed project. She also indicated that the two-way left-turn lane should be extended to include George Smith Road and Indian Guide Road. She left her phone number in the voicemail.

Response to comment 1: On July 28 at 11:25 a.m., Chelsea Starr, Acting Senior Environmental Planner, returned Carol Burke's call. A voicemail was left stating Caltrans received her comment.

Comment 2:

On July 28 at 12:03 p.m., Carol Burke returned Chelsea Starr's call and discussed the project.

Ms. Burke indicated that this is not the first time the two-way left-turn lane has come up as a point of discussion in the community and showed support for the project. She indicated the road is dangerous as is, and the intersection at George Smith Road is the most dangerous. She recounted personal experiences of nearly being run off the road near that intersection because it was hard to get out of traffic's way as she attempted to make a turn onto George Smith Road. She indicated it is also difficult for her to get onto the road from George Smith Road because of the traffic and a nearby curve. She indicated the curve makes it difficult to see that someone has slowed on the mainline to turn off of the State Route 180. She suggested beginning the turn lane at least two intersections east of the library. She suggested placing a sign before the curve near George Smith Road to indicate slowing traffic ahead. She recounted additional personal experiences regarding hearing collisions occur on State Route 180 from her place of residence. She indicated there are businesses and buildings being built in the area and the project design should account for that.

Chelsea thanked her for her comment and for her interest in the project. She was informed that the Project Delivery Team will consider all comments received, however some items will be outside the scope of this project and the available funding. Ms. Burke was added to the mailing list and will receive a copy of the final environmental document, which will include her comment and a formal response.

Response to comment 2: Thank you again for your support of the project and for taking the time to provide your comment. Responses to your comments are broken into three parts detailed below.

Comment 2 (part 1):

Ms. Burke recounted personal experiences of nearly being run off the road near that intersection because it was hard to get out of traffic's way as she attempts to make a turn onto George Smith Road. She indicated it is also difficult for her to get onto the road from George Smith Road because of the traffic and a nearby curve. The curve makes it difficult to see that someone has slowed on the mainline to turn off of the State Route 180. She suggested beginning the turn lane at least two intersections east of the library.

Response to comment 2 (part 1): The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment 2 (part 2):

She suggested placing a sign before the curve near George Smith Road to indicate slowing traffic ahead.

Response to comment 2 (part 2): Caltrans maintains the significance of a sign's warning value by installing signs only after an investigation establishes a need for a sign. This intersection has recently been evaluated, and investigations did not identify conditions that identified a need for a sign to indicate slowing traffic ahead.

Comment 2 (part 3):

She indicated there are businesses and buildings being built in the area and the project design should account for that.

Response to comment 2 (part 3): This project's purpose is to improve safety and reduce collisions on State Route 180 in Squaw Valley. The project need is based on the findings of a traffic investigation report. This type of project is funded and developed based on the existing environment and data that the traffic investigations establish.

Comment from: California Highway Patrol

Comment 1:

From: Andrade, Miguel@CHP <MAndrade@chp.ca.gov>
Sent: Friday, July 29, 2022 1:04 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>; Starr, Chelsea@DOT <Chelsea.Starr@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: FW: Environmental Document Review – SCH # 2022060682 – Due to Lead Agency by 08/01/2022

Good afternoon,

I was asked to look into the following Environmental Impact Review as it related to the affects to the California Highway Patrol. If you suspect this project will affect our response time to incidents or public safety or if you don't see any affects please let me know either way, thank you. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Miguel Andrade, Sergeant
CHP Fresno Area
1380 E. Fortune Ave
Fresno, CA 93725
(559) 705-2200

Subject: Environmental Document Review – SCH # 2022060682 – Due to Lead Agency by 08/01/2022

Good afternoon,

Special Projects Section (SPS) recently received the referenced Notice of Environmental Impact document from the State Clearinghouse (SCH) outlined in the following Web site:

State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization (ca.gov)

Due to the project's geographical proximity, please use the attached checklist to assess its potential impact to local operations and public safety. If impact is determined, responses should be e-mailed directly to the Lead Agency with cc to SCH and myself. If there is no impact, please do not include SCH or the Lead Agency in your response.

For more information on the EIR review process, please check out: Commanders EIR Training.pdf.

Please feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Kristen Lange, Staff Services Analyst
Special Projects Section, Transportation Planning Unit
CHP Headquarters
601 N. 7th Street
Sacramento, CA 95811
Office: (916) 843-3370
Direct: (916) 843-3386

Response to comment 1:

From: Starr, Chelsea@DOT
Sent: Monday, August 8, 2022 1:58 PM
To: Andrade, Miguel@CHP <MAndrade@chp.ca.gov>
Subject: RE: Environmental Document Review – SCH # 2022060682 – Due to Lead Agency by 08/01/2022

Good Afternoon Miguel,

Thank you for your interest in the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Lane project, SCH # 2022060682. This project is not anticipated to have an impact on CHP response times.

Please let me know if you have any other questions or concerns.

Thank you,
Chelsea Starr
Acting Senior Environmental Planner
Caltrans District 6
Fresno, CA 93726
Cell: 559-383-5432

Comment from: Christine Flannigan

Comment 1:

From: Christine Flannigan <cflannigan1@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 19, 2022 2:20 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Dear Jennifer,

I hope your day is going well. I would like to submit comments regarding the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization. Your name was provided as a contact.

As a resident of Squaw Valley, I am in favor of the project; however, do have a few concerns and suggestions. They are as follows:

1. As long as Caltrans is doing the work, it would be very much appreciated if a pedestrian pathway was included in the project. The cost will be much lower while construction elements are already in place. This is a safety issue. People, including myself, have walked along Highway 180 in Squaw Valley to get from one place to another while vehicles are going by at speeds from 55 - 65 miles per hour. This is a dangerous scenario because there is no path and people find themselves close to the highway.
2. Being part of a local non-profit organization that was responsible for getting the State Scenic Highway designation for Highway 180, I am concerned about how the project will affect the State Scenic Highway designation. I am proud to live in a community that is so beautiful and recognized by the State as such. How will the project affect the State Scenic Highway designation?
3. The intersection of George Smith Road and Highway 180, just west of the planned project, is a busy intersection. It would be appreciated if the project would be extended west to include the intersection of George Smith Road and Highway 180. Again, this is a safety issue.
4. I'm not aware of a center turn lane on a highway where the speed limit is 55 miles per hour. My suggestion is to lower the speed limit to 45 along the length of the project.

Thank you for your consideration on these matters. Please provide confirmation that my comments will be considered with regard to the named project and submitted to the appropriate party(ies).

Thank you so much!
Christine Flannigan

Christine Flannigan
559-731-1960

Response to comment 1:

On Wed, Jul 20, 2022 at 11:04 AM Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov> wrote:

Hi Christine!

Thank you for your comments. I have forwarded your email to Chelsea Starr, who will be responding to your comments in the Final Environmental Document (FED). All comments received during the public review period are included in the FED.

Jennifer

Jennifer H. Taylor
District 6 - Environmental Office Chief
Office – 559-230-3101
Cell – 559-287-9844
<https://cadot.webex.com/meet/jennifer.taylor>

Comment 2:

From: Christine Flannigan <cflannigan1@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 20, 2022 11:12 AM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Re: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Thank you so much!

Christine Flannigan
559-731-1960

Response to comments 1 and 2: Thank you again for your support of the project and for taking the time to provide your comments and suggestions. Responses to your comments are broken into four parts, which are detailed below.

Comment part 1:

As long as Caltrans is doing the work, it would be very much appreciated if a pedestrian pathway was included in the project. The cost will be much lower while construction elements are already in place. This is a safety issue. People, including myself, have walked along Highway 180 in Squaw Valley to get from one place to another while vehicles are going by at speeds from 55 - 65 miles per hour. This is a dangerous scenario because there is no path and people find themselves close to the highway.

Response to comment part 1: The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a customer service request is suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment part 2:

Being part of a local non-profit organization that was responsible for getting the State Scenic Highway designation for Highway 180, I am concerned about how the project will affect the State Scenic Highway designation. I am proud to live in a community that is so beautiful and recognized by the State as such. How will the project affect the State Scenic Highway designation?

Response to comment part 2: The project will remain within Caltrans' right-of-way. The Scenic Highway designation is protected by the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The Fresno County General Plan does not govern activities within the Caltrans right-of-way. For these reasons, the project will have no impact on the State Route 180 Scenic Highway designation.

Comment part 3:

The intersection of George Smith Road and Highway 180, just west of the planned project, is a busy intersection. It would be appreciated if the project would be extended west to include the intersection of George Smith Road and Highway 180. Again, this is a safety issue.

Response to comment part 3: The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road. Therefore, due to limited funding and the high number of project collisions near the center of the existing project limits, the two-way left-turn lane will remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment part 4:

I'm not aware of a center turn lane on a highway where the speed limit is 55 miles per hour. My suggestion is to lower the speed limit to 45 along the length of the project.

Response to comment part 4: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from: Dirk Charley

Comment 1:

On August 11, Dirk Charley called Jennifer H. Taylor, Caltrans Environmental Office Chief, and left a voicemail. The voicemail stated the call was from Dirk Charley – Tribal Liaison for Dunlap Band of Mono Indians. He referenced the Notice of Availability for the project. He said he in support of the project— anything to help improve safety. He said they would be happy to assist if there were any cultural resources in the area BUT stated the Squaw Valley Tribe would be the group to be involved.

Response to comment 1:

On Aug 17, 2022, at 4:25 PM, Macias, Mandy S@DOT <Mandy.Macias@dot.ca.gov> wrote:

Hello Dirk,

I wanted to confirm that our staff had received your recent comments in response to the Notice of Availability for the State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization Project. The Project is located on State Route 180 between 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road and Elwood Road, PM 89.6 to 90.7. The cultural resources studies were in development as recent as November, 2021. The testing and excavations were monitored by Florence Dick (DBMI) and the results were negative.

Thank you for your time and attention, feel free to contact us if you have any additional questions.

MANDY MACIAS
Associate Environmental Planner, Archaeologist
Native American Coordinator, District 6
Central Region Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726
(559) 908-7706
mandy.macias@dot.ca.gov

Comment 2:

On August 18, 2022, at 7:08 AM, DIRK CHARLEY <dcharley2016@gmail.com> wrote:

Thanks Mandy. I appreciate you notifying me.

Sent from my iPhone

Response to comment 2: Thank you again for your comment.

Comment from: Eve Hudson

Comment 1:

From: Eve Hudson <evehudson2@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 17, 2022 3:56 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: proposed turn lane for Squaw Valley, Fresno County

There are many accidents at these intersections.

Eve Hudson
Resident of Squaw Valley
559-246-4672

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comment is appreciated and has been noted.

Comment from: Jackson Hurst

Comment 1:

From: Jackson Hurst <ghostlightmater@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, July 18, 2022 1:06 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization IS/MND Document Public Comment

Name - Jackson Hurst

Address - 4216 Cornell Crossing, Kennesaw, Georgia 30144

Comment - I have reviewed the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration document for Caltrans State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization Project. I approve and support the build alternative for Caltrans State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization Project because the installation of a two way left turn lane on CA 180 will improve safety and reduce the number of vehicle collisions on CA 180 resulting from people turning into Mountain Valley Community Church.

Sent from ghostlightmater@yahoo.com

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated and have been noted.

Comment from: Dr. Joseph F. Ruda

Comment 1:

On August 2, Dr. Joseph F. Ruda called Jennifer H. Taylor, Caltrans Environmental Office Chief, and left a voicemail. The voicemail suggested that widening be extended to Indian Guide Road and George Smith Road due to hazardous intersections. He also talked about not seeing around the elevated area.

Response to comment 1: On August 3, Chelsea Starr, Caltrans Acting Senior Environmental Planner, called Dr. Joseph F. Ruda and discussed the project. Dr. Ruda stated the following: two entrances are defective, Indian Guide Road and George Smith Road. Indian Guide Road is defective because of the land elevation on the southeast corner of its intersection with State Route 180. It's dangerous and hard to see, and a wider left-turn lane would help see around the corner. George Smith Road is depressed (lower) in elevation and has a similar issue. These intersections would benefit from a two-way turn lane. If Caltrans is already installing a two-way left-turn lane, then it makes sense to extend it to include these intersections.

Dr. Ruda also stated he owns the land next to Indian Guide Road and State Route 180 at the apple orchard.

Chelsea thanked Dr. Ruda for his comment and his interest in the project. Chelsea informed him that the project delivery team will consider all comments received; however, some items will be outside the scope of this project and the available funding. Dr. Ruda's current address was added to the mailing list, and he will receive a copy of the final environmental document, which includes his comments and a formal response.

Response 2 to comment 1: Thank you again for your interest in the project and for taking the time to provide your comments. Caltrans will install delineators (flexible vertical markers) at the intersection of State Route 180 at Indian Guide Road. The delineators will help motorists see the intersection as they approach it, particularly at night. Caltrans maintenance personnel will complete this before project construction.

The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road or Indian Guide Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment from: Lonnie Work

Comment 1:

From: Lonnie <lonnie@esquaw.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2022 10:55 AM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Cc: joyce@esquaw.com
Subject: Squaw Valley 2 way left turn project

Hello, Jennifer–

Please find attached my comments on the Two-Way Left Turn Channelization project for Squaw Valley. Also, please add me to the project mailing list.

Thank you,

Lonnie O. Work, CEO
Work Enterprises, Inc.
31151 E. Kings Canyon
Squaw Valley, CA 93675

Office - 559-332-2881
Fax - 559-332-2660
E-Mail - lonnie@esquaw.com
Cell - 559-696-9675

Attachment 1:

DATE: July 28, 2022
TO: CalTrans - Jennifer H. Taylor
FROM: Lonnie Work, CEO - Work Enterprises, Inc.
RE: Two-Way Left Turn Channelization-Squaw Valley

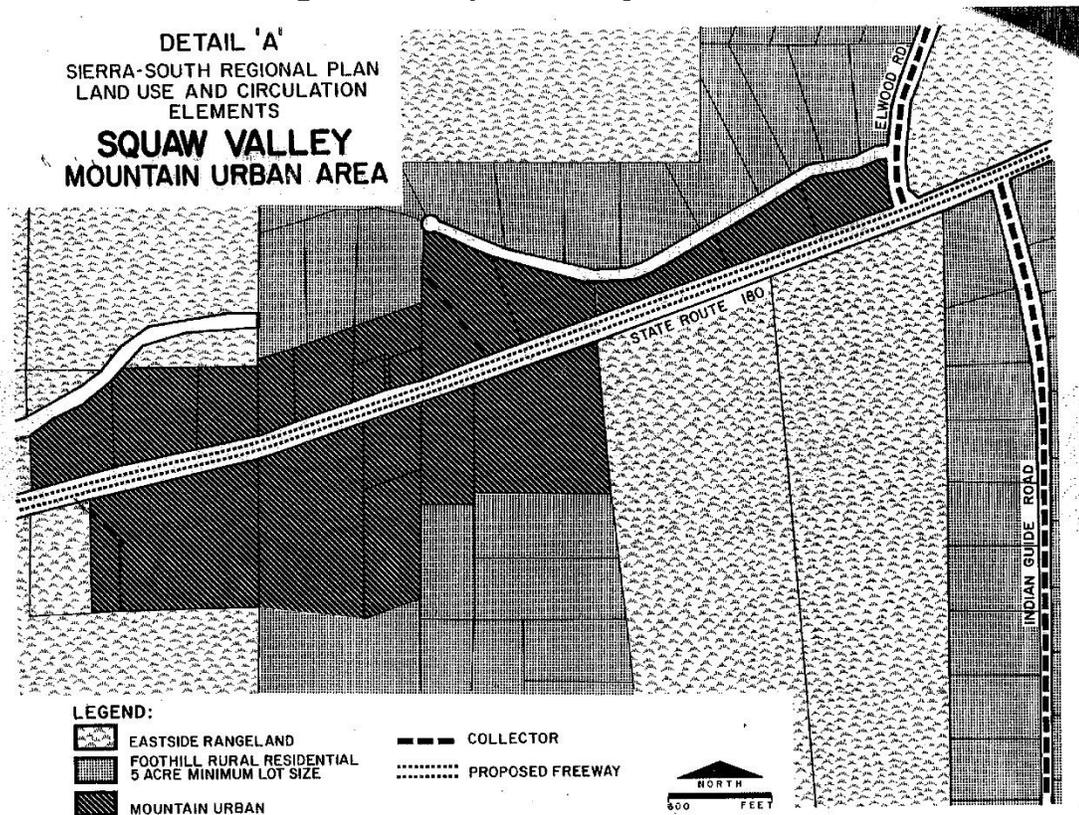
Hello, Jennifer:

I attended the orientation meeting last night at the Bear Mountain Library. I am the owner of Squaw Valley Realty, the Squaw Valley Motel, and three other Highway 180 frontage properties that are directly affected by your project. This commercial strip of Highway 180 has long needed attention. While CalTrans has informed us that the highway in our area does not have a traffic accident problem that warrants speed reduction, the reality is that accident occurrence here is much greater than your records indicate. I say this with some confidence and from first-hand experience. My real estate company has been here since 1976 and the motel since 1950. A left turn lane will have significant impact on the frequency of accidents. But, the turn lane needs to address the future of this commercial sector as well. I have attached a copy of the Squaw Valley Mountain Urban Area map as adopted by Fresno

County in 1984. This is a portion of the Fresno County General Plan. As you can see on the map, the dark shaded areas are properties designated for intensive urban uses that include commercial, office, light industrial, and apartments. Many of these properties are already so zoned and all of them are eligible for those zonings. You can see that this district extends all the way down Highway 180 to Elwood Road on the north side of the highway and, in fact, the northwest corner of Elwood and Hwy 180 is already zoned commercial. The turn lane needs to extend to at least Elwood Road. The turn lane stops quite a bit east of George Smith Road on its western boundary, it should continue to George Smith Road. The George Smith intersection is a bottle neck to westbound traffic, particularly in the summer. That traffic must stop until anyone going southbound on George Smith from the east has cleared the intersection. I was told that the turn lane was not extended to George Smith because of the drop off on the highway on the south side in this area and that the land for the turn lane all comes from the south side of the highway. It seems to me that there is nothing to prevent CalTrans from using the north side of their right of way to provide for the turn lane in this section, thereby eliminating the need to deal with that drop off.

CalTrans has taken the position that this is not a community area. That is far from the truth. The Squaw Valley Mountain Urban Area map establishes the existence of the community as a planned area since 1984, a community that, in reality, has been in existence for much longer than that. The simple truth is that this area has developed as a planned commercial community and will continue to expand as such. It has specific planned boundaries and, if CalTrans is going to spend millions of dollars to create the turn lane, the turn lane should be designed to reflect those boundaries. And, because this is a commercial community, the speed limit in this area should be reduced to 45mph. All of this is just simple common sense.

Attachment: An image of the Squaw Valley Mountain Urban Area



Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated and are addressed in several parts below.

Comment part 1:

While CalTrans has informed us that the highway in our area does not have a traffic accident problem that warrants speed reduction, the reality is that accident occurrence here is much greater than your records indicate.

Response to comment part 1: Traffic collision information used for Caltrans work comes from a statewide database created by Caltrans that collects all reported traffic collision reports prepared by the California Highway Patrol and/or local law enforcement agencies for reported traffic collisions on the State highway system. Traffic collisions may be higher than our investigations indicate, particularly minor collisions or collisions involving only property damage. For a traffic collision to become part of the history of a highway segment, a traffic collision report documenting the collision must be prepared by the law enforcement agency and reported to the Caltrans database called the Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System. Additionally, the traffic collision information that was used to start this project came from an investigation that looked at a specific segment of State Route 180 over a specific historic period. Traffic collisions that may have occurred before or

after the investigation period or that occurred on the highway beyond the segment limits of the investigation are not used for project design.

Comment part 2:

The turn lane needs to extend to at least Elwood Road. The turn lane stops quite a bit east of George Smith Road on its western boundary, it should continue to George Smith Road.

Response to comment part 2: The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road or Elwood Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment part 3:

I was told that the turn lane was not extended to George Smith because of the drop off on the highway on the south side in this area and that the land for the turn lane all comes from the south side of the highway. It seems to me that there is nothing to prevent CalTrans from using the north side of their right of way to provide for the turn lane in this section, thereby eliminating the need to deal with that drop off.

Response to comment part 3: The drop-off on the south side of State Route 180 is not why George Smith Road was not included in the project scope. Please refer to the response to comment part 2 for the reason why George Smith Road was not included in the project.

Comment part 4:

The Squaw Valley Mountain Urban Area map establishes the existence of the community as a planned area since 1984, a community that, in reality, has been in existence for much longer than that. The simple truth is that this area has developed as a planned commercial community and will continue to expand as such. It has specific planned boundaries and, if CalTrans is going to spend millions of dollars to create the turn lane, the turn lane should be designed to reflect those boundaries.

Response to comment part 4: The project's purpose is to improve safety and reduce collisions on State Route 180 in Squaw Valley. The project need is based on the findings of a traffic investigation report. This type of project is funded and developed based on the existing environment and data that the traffic investigations establish.

Comment part 5:

And, because this is a commercial community, the speed limit in this area should be reduced to 45mph. All of this is just simple common sense.

Response to comment part 5: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Mark

Comment 1:

From: M E <theads2009@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2022 2:16 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Highway 180, Squaw Valley discussion.

Hello Jennifer,

I was looking over the information provided at last night's meeting at Bear Mountain Library & was advised to address any comments or concerns to You.

We don't want more Commercialized Areas up here!!

This is a Scenic Highway that may have some businesses built too close to the highway. Widening the road would only make that Worse!

People need to pay more attention to the road, Period!

I did notice last time I was at the Trading Post, there is a huge Log or something out front, that might cause a blind spot for some

Any new businesses (if they must) should not be built along the Highway, should be off side roads only!

Highway Speeds of 55mph on two lane is Fine. It seems the most complaint is at Trading Post, maybe they need to increase their parking area or move the fueling area farther back away from highway, maybe back alongside their store

Widening the Road, would only make the roadway closer to the buildings, not solve the issue.

Besides, it's not fair to the owners of businesses, to have to sell their frontal property, become closer to roadway!!!

This is a Scenic Highway, Gateway to King's Canyon & Sequoia's, Trees have been here for a time, Mature Trees should not be Removed.

Please consider My concerns & Thank You for allowing my input on this topic!

Have a Great Day,

Mark

Get Outlook for Android

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated. Caltrans does not have the authority to dictate the placement of parking or future development on non-Caltrans right-of-way. Your other comments are addressed in several parts below.

Comment part 1:

This is a Scenic Highway that may have some businesses built too close to the highway. Widening the road would only make that Worse!

Response to comment part 1: The project will remain within Caltrans' right-of-way. The Scenic Highway designation is protected by the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The Fresno County General Plan does not govern activities within the Caltrans right-of-way. For these reasons, the project will have no impact on the State Route 180 Scenic Highway designation.

Comment part 2:

Widening the Road, would only make the roadway closer to the buildings, not solve the issue.

Response to comment part 2: The two-way left-turn lane proposed by this project is intended to provide a refuge for slower, left-turning road users turning into or out of driveways by separating them from faster through motorists. The two-way left-turn lane is intended to reduce the potential for traffic collisions on the roadway, which is the identified need. Although the two-way left-turn lane will widen the roadway where it is placed, such widening is not expected to subject motorists to any increased potential for conflict with buildings.

Comment part 3

Besides, it's not fair to the owners of businesses, to have to sell their frontal property, become closer to roadway!!!

Response to comment part 3: The project will occur within Caltrans' right-of-way, which means no properties will be purchased for this project. Property owners will not have to sell their land for this project.

Comment part 4:

This is a Scenic Highway, Gateway to King's Canyon & Sequoia's, Trees have been here for a time, Mature Trees should not be Removed.

Response to comment part 4: Mature trees are removed only when necessary to achieve the project's goals. The project will require the removal of seven oak trees. Caltrans will replace the oaks with oak trees of the same

species or another native oak species. As detailed in Sections 2.1.1. and 2.1.4, oak tree removal will be mitigated with the following measures:

One oak tree will require the following measures:

- The removal of a large, multi-boled blue oak tree with a diameter at breast height of 43 inches will be mitigated by onsite replanting at a 10-to-1 ratio.
- [The following text has been added since the draft environmental document was circulated.] Replacement planting will be accompanied by a five-year mitigation and monitoring plan, which will include monitoring and maintenance to ensure a 70 percent minimum survival rate after five years.

Six oak trees will require the following measures:

- Per Caltrans standards, trees removed for highway improvements must be replaced at a minimum 1-to-1 ratio. It is expected that replacement planting will deliver a 1-to-5 ratio or 35 new trees. To achieve this replanting ratio, additional trees will be planted within the suitable existing right-of-way. If necessary, additional planting can take place within Caltrans' right-of-way outside the project limits or through partnerships with other organizations. The trees will be drought-tolerant California natives that use low amounts of water and attract pollinator species.

The project will remain within Caltrans' right-of-way. The Scenic Highway designation is protected by the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The Fresno County General Plan does not govern activities within the Caltrans right-of-way. For these reasons, the project will have no impact on the State Route 180 Scenic Highway designation.

Comment from: Rita and Udo Frank

Comment 1:

From: UDO FRANK <ygoofrank@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 12, 2022 9:11 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: HWY 180 two-way left turn center lane Squaw Valley

Dear Jennifer,

We would like to express our gratitude for the project Caltrans is considering to undertake of installing a two-way left turn center lane on HWY 180 in Squaw Valley. This will greatly enhance traffic safety on that stretch of the road. We also would like to add a few points for consideration to make the project even more effective.

First, if the center lane could be extended to the intersection of George Smith Rd.; secondly, if a speed limit lower than the current 55mi could be implemented; and thirdly, as people walk between the various business along that stretch of 180, if there'd be room for some kind of pedestrian walkway stretching from the public library to the pizza and auto repair shop.

We hope all that could be done without impacting the scenic Highway designation which is very important to our area.

Thank you for allowing us to provide input to the process.

Kindest regards,
Rita & Udo Frank,
Pinehurst
Sent from my iPhone

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project and your support. Your comments are appreciated and addressed in several parts below.

Comment part 1:

First, if the center lane could be extended to the intersection of George Smith Rd.;

Response to comment part 1: The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment part 2:

...secondly, if a speed limit lower than the current 55mi could be implemented;

Response to comment part 2: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment part 3:

...and thirdly, as people walk between the various business along that stretch of 180, if there'd be room for some kind of pedestrian walkway stretching from the public library to the pizza and auto repair shop.

Response to comment part 3: The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a customer service request is suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment part 4:

We hope all that could be done without impacting the Scenic Highway designation which is very important to our area.

Response to comment part 4: The project will remain within Caltrans' right-of-way. The Scenic Highway designation is protected by the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The Fresno County General Plan does not govern activities within the Caltrans right-of-way. For these reasons, the project will have no impact on the State Route 180 Scenic Highway designation.

Comment from: Sandy Boswell

From: sandyandherb@gmail.com <sandyandherb@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 14, 2022 12:38 PM
To: Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Initial study for Highway 180 turn lane

Good Afternoon Jennifer,

I have been coming to Squaw Valley since 1988 when I purchased my first property here. I can remember, as a single woman then, how worried I would be if I saw headlights behind me at night when I would make a trip here from San Diego county. Now it is non stop traffic like Highway 41. We moved here in 2003 and it is hard to believe the increase in traffic. We approach Highway 180 from Dunlap Road and have to wait on an entourage to pass many times, especially in the summer considering all the park traffic. There have also been an increased number of accidents.

Most of the speeding through the main part of Squaw Valley between Elwood Road and George Smith Road is done by tourists. We definitely need to lower the speed limit there.

Another aspect to consider is the installation of NO PARKING signs 100 ft from establishments like the Squaw Valley Trading Post, Kipers and Bear Mountain Pizza. As you can see from the picture, big trucks and RV's park there making it impossible to exit safely from these locations.

Thanks for your consideration,

Sandy Boswell
37640 Dunlap Road
Squaw Valley, CA 93675
Mailing address: PO Box 376, Dunlap 93621
559/314-4608

Attachment: An Image of Two Trucks Parked on the Shoulder of State Route 180



Comment 1:

Most of the speeding through the main part of Squaw Valley between Elwood Road and George Smith Road is done by tourists. We definitely need to lower the speed limit there.

Response to comment 1: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment 2:

Another aspect to consider is the installation of NO PARKING signs 100 ft from establishments like the Squaw Valley Trading Post, Kipers and Bear Mountain Pizza. As you can see from the picture, big trucks and RV's park there making it impossible to exit safely from these locations.

Response to comment 2: Caltrans can evaluate the highway in response to this request to determine locations where such signage is reasonable and appropriate and can install signs accordingly based on addressing traffic safety concerns. Please submit your requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment from: Sarah Worthen and Ryan Puckett

Sarah Worthen and Ryan Puckett
30250 George Smith Road
Squaw Valley, CA 93675

7/14/2022

Jennifer H. Taylor
Environmental Office Chief
California Dept. of Transportation
2015 East Shields Ave., Suite 100
Fresno, CA 93726

Dear Ms. Taylor,

My husband and I own property on both sides of the Highway 180 scenic corridor in Caltrans District 6 in Squaw Valley, within Fresno County. Our properties are included in the area designated for widening under the proposed channelization project. We have reviewed the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the State Route 180 Two-Way Left Turn Channelization published by Caltrans and we thank all parties involved for recognizing the need for safety mitigations as well as scenic preservation on this stretch of highway. We understand the period for public comment is now open and are submitting these comments, questions and concerns.

Turning access to 30595 East Kings Canyon Road

Our first question is regarding safety and access. One of our property entrances is located along the highway in an area currently scheduled for widening. Approximately 15 years ago a curbing change was made which interferes with our ability to turn safely into our driveway. To avoid hitting the curbing when traveling eastbound, we have to slow down to almost a full stop and make a hairpin turn backwards in the westward direction. This is both dangerous in fast moving highway traffic and impossible when pulling a stock trailer for our cattle. **In addition to preventing stock trailer access, it prevents large service vehicles and other farm equipment from safely turning into our driveway when traveling eastward.**

Knowing that the road will be widened in this area and that the curbing is going to be removed anyway, we are asking for the replacement design to take our driveway and gate into closer consideration so we can have more gentle and safe turning access when traveling from both directions. This was always the case in previous decades and only became an issue when the current curbing was installed. Since learning about the channelization project well over a year ago we have made several attempts to discuss this possibility with Caltrans. We have spoken with survey teams in person, corresponded with our DOT representative on-line, and submitted a Customer

Service Request ticket. Most recently, we were advised that there is nothing wrong with the existing curbing and we should just move our gate. Well, the existing curbing is going to be torn out and replaced anyway. This seems like an opportune time to consider redesigning it. Additionally, our gate was there long before the current curbing was installed and the gate is bordered on one side by a ditch and on the other side by a long concrete footing that can't be driven over. The gate is placed in the exact singular place that allows vehicle access to the parcel. We are providing a photo attachment as a visual illustration, however we would like to meet with someone at the driveway location to discuss this in person. The issue is more easily viewed and understood when seen on foot.

Mature oak tree removal and proposed replacement

Our second question is in response to information contained in the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared by Caltrans. The study indicates proposed removal of at least 7 established mature oak trees on the south side of the existing roadway. One of the largest trees identified for removal borders our property. As noted in the study, these trees add scenic value to the highway as well as serving ecological purpose in the landscape. These trees provide shade, habitat for natural fauna and assistance with erosion control along the natural drainage areas from Bear Mountain to the pasture lands below. I would also like to note that for property owners, such as us, these trees provide buffers against the sound and dust pollution of the roadway, as well as visual barriers that both improve our scenic view and prevent intrusion of our privacy by passing drivers.

I do not know the age of these trees although I know they were already mature when I was born, which means most are probably 80-100 years old if not more. Loss of our native oaks has been ongoing in the drought and these trees are not easily or quickly replaced. For each tree removed, Caltrans proposes replacement with 5-10 new trees of an unspecified species.

The plan to replace these trees with a higher ratio of comparable native species, ideally oak, trees, sounds very thoughtful and proactive on paper. In the scope of a project as large as this we know that the cost of young sapling trees is very low and replacing removed trees with a higher ratio of new ones is a simple mitigation. Our concern is whether or not a plan is in place to ensure these new trees actually survive. **Our question is will Caltrans be monitoring and supporting these young replacement trees until they establish roots deep enough to survive on their own in our current drought conditions?** The trees proposed for removal are healthy and strong enough to have survived only on existing rainfall, but new trees of any species will die without supplemental water after planting, regardless of replacement ratio. As someone who has worked at a nursery that specializes in large landscape trees, including native species, I know that **newly planted trees need weekly deep watering for at least their first year to survive.**

Will there be any accountability if the new trees die? If there is no realistic plan in place to ensure the new trees survive, the study should be amended to reflect that this part of the scenic highway is being stripped of mature native trees and will ultimately remain barren, significantly altering the landscape for highway users, viewers and adjacent property owners.

Proposed expansion of the current project boundaries

Our final thought is in response to notes reviewed after a Friends of Scenic 180 meeting referencing additional elements to be requested from Caltrans. One of these is, "Request that the project distance be lengthened to include the George Smith Road and Highway 180 intersection." As the property owners of two of the four corners at this intersection, we are concerned by this recommendation. **We have always supported and continue to support reduced speed along the 180 corridor from just west of George Smith Road to Indian Guide.** We feel that reduced speed is imperative for public safety in this part of Squaw Valley. We believe that channelization by itself will not accomplish this goal. If anything, channelization ensures that traffic does not need to slow. **While we do support channelization along the portion of the highway with existing businesses where vehicles are frequently turning in and out of parking lots, we do not support expansion of the project westward all the way to the George Smith intersection.**

As can be viewed between George Smith Road and the existing start point of the channelization project, the highway is elevated above ground level along a portion of this area. A significant stretch of new berm would need to be created, changing the level of the land, bringing elevated traffic closer to our property, necessitating the removal of 4-5 additional mature oak trees, significantly changing the scenic view and potentially impacting the natural drainage channel from Bear Mountain and seasonal vernal pools in this area. In the Initial Study with Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration, this area is partially shown in Figure 2-1. To many residents and visitors, this is an iconic portion of scenic 180, so much so that travelers frequently photograph it. **Expansion of the channelization project here would not only significantly alter the landscape and view, it is not justified by any real need for additional turning access in this stretch of roadway.**

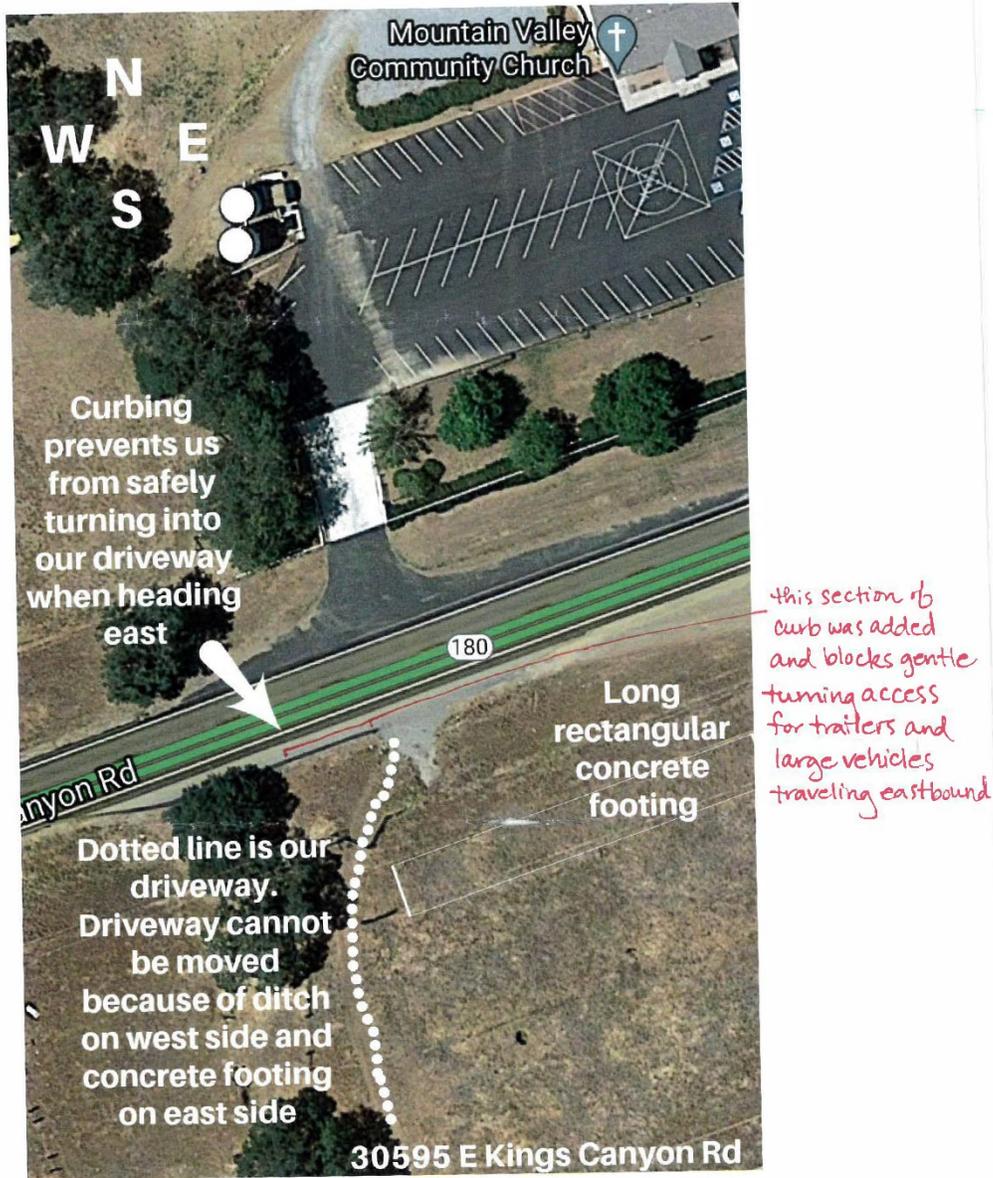
The properties along this portion of 180 are zoned for residential and agricultural preservation use. I believe there are only 3 driveways in the proposed expansion area, and 2 of them are ours. One is the alternate access point to our residential property. It is used maybe 3-4 times a year if large service vehicles can't pass through our main gate. The second driveway is also ours and has never been used in my memory. We keep it only for emergency access to a vacant parcel on the north side of the highway. The third driveway can also be used to access our vacant lot and belongs to a neighboring vacant lot, neither of which sees regular use. There is no justification to widen the roadway and increase turning access in this

portion of 180, where businesses do not exist and are not supported by current zoning. **If reduced speed for safe turning is desired, a reduced speed limit should be implemented to slow traffic in both directions.**

Please accept our sincere thanks for taking the time to read our thoughts, respond to our questions and consider our recommendations. As multi-generational members of the community we look forward to communicating and working with you further as you move forward with the goal of increasing safety along the scenic highway corridor.

Sarah Worthen and Ryan Puckett
(559) 972-2363
(559) 970-1346
Attachment enclosed

Attachment: An Aerial Image of the Driveway Discussed in the Comment



Comment 1:

Knowing that the road will be widened in this area and that **the curbing is going to be removed anyway, we are asking for the replacement design to take our driveway and gate into closer consideration** so we can have more gentle and safe turning access when traveling from both directions.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest and support in the project. Your comments are appreciated. Project construction will begin about 100 feet east of your driveway. Therefore, your existing driveway will not be impacted by this project. There may be some temporary inconvenience during

construction as lanes are managed, but your driveway will not be altered. The advice provided in response to your prior customer service request still stands.

Comment 2:

Our concern is whether or not a plan is in place to ensure these new trees actually survive. **Our question is will Caltrans be monitoring and supporting these young replacement trees until they establish roots deep enough to survive on their own in our current drought conditions?**

Response to comment 2: Revegetation will be programmed in conjunction with and funded as part of this project; it will be designed and constructed under a separate expenditure authorization. The cost of the work includes any irrigation that may be required to establish the new plant material. This planting must be under construction within two years of acceptance of the highway contract that damaged or removed the existing vegetation. A five-year mitigation and monitoring plan will accompany the project, which includes a monitoring and maintenance plan to ensure a minimum of a 70 percent survival rate for the plantings after five years.

Comment 3:

We have always supported and continue to support reduced speed along the 180 corridor from just west of George Smith Road to Indian Guide. We feel that reduced speed is imperative for public safety in this part of Squaw Valley. We believe that channelization by itself will not accomplish this goal. If anything, channelization ensures that traffic does not need to slow.

Response to comment 3: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment 4:

While we do support channelization along the portion of the highway with existing businesses where vehicles are frequently turning in and out of parking lots, we do not support expansion of the project westward all the way to the George Smith intersection.

Response to comment 4: The project limits will not be extended to the George Smith Road intersection.

Comment from Sheryl Mercier

From: SHERYL MERCIER <skmer5@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 5, 2022 6:55 AM
To: Ellis, Ellery@DOT <ellery.ellis@dot.ca.gov>; Taylor, Jennifer H@DOT <jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: Stay Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

Hello Ellery and Jennifer,

I am a resident here in Squaw Valley and plan to be at the July 27 meeting. At the previous meeting at the Bear Mountain Library, there was a request made that I do not see in the Project Description.

Request: There is a need for a Pedestrian Pathway. Children walk along the highway from The Trading Center to the Library each day during the school year. Residents walk from Indian Guide to George Smith road to get to the stores and church.

Other concerns:

- * The community continues to ask for a reduction in speed.
- * There are also accidents at the George Smith entrance to 180- was that considered in the traffic accident analysis? There should be a turn lane there also. Every time we pull out or turn in, we do not feel safe.
- * The Scenic Highway status of 180 is of concern- will this project affect the status?

Thank you,
Sheryl Mercier
559 999 5174

Comment 1:

Request: There is a need for a Pedestrian Pathway. Children walk along the highway from The Trading Center to the Library each day during the school year. Residents walk from Indian Guide to George Smith road to get to the stores and church.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your support and interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated. The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a

customer service request is suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment 2:

*The community continues to ask for a reduction in speed.

Response to comment 2: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment 3:

*There are also accidents at the George Smith entrance to 180- was that considered in the traffic accident analysis? There should be a turn lane there also. Every time we pull out or turn in, we do not feel safe.

Response to comment 3: The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment 4:

*The Scenic Highway status of 180 is of concern- will this project affect the status?

Response to comment 4: The project will remain within Caltrans' right-of-way. The Scenic Highway designation is protected by the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The Fresno County General Plan does not govern activities within the Caltrans right-of-way. For these reasons, the project will have no impact on the State Route 180 Scenic Highway designation.

Comment from Steve Mitchum:

From: steve mitchum <sjmitchum@live.com>
Sent: Sunday, July 24, 2022 7:34 PM
To: Ellis, Ellery@DOT <ellery.ellis@dot.ca.gov>
Subject: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

July 24, 2022

To: Ellery Ellis, Project Manager, Caltrans
From: Steve Mitchum, Squaw Valley resident
Subject: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

The purpose of this document is to request changes to the subject project.

Given that the project is intended to improve traffic safety on State Route 180 in the Squaw Valley vicinity, I feel that the project should include the following additions.

1. **Extend the project 900 feet to the west.** The existing plan provides a continuous left turn lane from the Mountain Valley Community Church main driveway to the intersection at Elwood Road. It should be noted that this gives no consideration to east-bound traffic turning left into the church's main drive way. It seems inappropriate to ignore this traffic element at the very beginning of the project. Additionally, the church holds a number of fund-raising events each year and utilizes an auxiliary driveway about 600 feet to the west of the main driveway. By extending the project 900 feet to the west, access to both driveways would be safer.
2. **Install "NO STOPPING" signs in the vicinity of all commercial driveways.** Frequent users of these businesses will have experienced instances when tourists and/or truckers have pulled off the travel lane in large vehicles just far enough to clear the solid white (fog) line. For various reasons they stop there, blocking the sight line from the driveways into on-coming traffic. Item 1.2.2 NEED of the Proposed Project document does not provide enough detail to determine whether or not sight-line impairment was a factor. Any offending vehicles would have moved on by the time first responders arrived. It is my suggestion that anyone formulating decisions regarding this project should experience the dangers of this scenario before deciding to ignore this recommendation.
3. **Construct left and right turn lanes at George Smith Road/Bear Mountain Road and at Indian Guide Road/Elwood Road.** It may be that these additions are not "warranted" at this time, but the proposed project will tend to allow the drivers travelling through this area to feel safer. I am suggesting that this will also tend to subliminally encourage them to drive faster, even after they have passed the improvements in the current project limits. It is my perception that traffic on State Route 180 in

Squaw Valley has increased significantly over recent years and I expect that it will continue to increase in the future, further intensifying the danger at these intersections. This is even more of a concern when the clouds move in and visibility is restricted. Please do not limit your evaluation of the justification for this project to past experience. You should also think about problems that will occur because of the changes you make.

I hope I am not too late in making these recommendations. I have only been made aware of this project in the last week, but I have been considering the problem for some time.

Respectfully
Steve Mitchum
(559) 332-2543
sjmitchum@live.com

Comment 1:

Extend the project 900 feet to the west.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to the main driveway of the Mountain Valley Community Church. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment 2:

Install “NO STOPPING” signs in the vicinity of all commercial driveways.

Response to comment 2: Caltrans can evaluate the highway in response to this request to determine locations where such signage is reasonable and appropriate. Caltrans can install signs according to traffic safety concerns. Please submit your requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment 3:

Construct left and right turn lanes at George Smith Road/Bear Mountain Road and at Indian Guide Road/Elwood Road

...Please do not limit your evaluation of the justification for this project to past experience. You should also think about problems that will occur because of the changes you make.

Response to comment 3: The project’s purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity

of motorist-related collisions on State Route 180. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. This type of project is funded and developed based on the existing environment and data that the traffic investigations establish. Therefore, the project will be designed according to the data available at this time.

Comment from Stephen Roberts

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Stephen Roberts

Address: 31935 Indian Guide

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

(Checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

I think it makes much more sense to extend the two-way left-turn lane to the west to include George Smith Road and to the east to include Elwood and Indian Guide Roads.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road, Elwood Road, or Indian Guide Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment from Tommy and Emma Linder

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Tommy and Emma Linder

Address: 34655 Bronco Ln

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Residents

(Not checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

We support the project.

Also put in a speed limit.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Other: Facebook

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your support and interest in the project. Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment 2, received on a comment card:

Addendum

Name: Tommy and Emma Linder

Address: 34655 Bronco Ln

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Residents

(Not checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

Project needs to extend west of George Smith Rd or put turn lane in there. George Smith Rd is the main artery for commuters in Squaw Valley.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Other: Facebook

Response to comment 2: Thank you again for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment from Tom Williams and Muggs Cannon

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Tom Williams and Muggs Cannon

Address: 30513 Ruth Hill Rd

City: SV

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Williams Ranch

(Checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

The left turn lane should be extended to George Smith Road—at night going west it is almost impossible to see where to turn onto Geo Smith—Geo Smith is on a steep incline from 180 and many accidents have happened—you cannot see George Smith Rd from 180 at night because of the steep incline.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Newsletter, Someone told me about it, Other: Email

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road, Elwood Road, or Indian Guide Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Caltrans will install delineators (flexible vertical markers) at the intersection of State Route 180 at George Smith Road to help motorists see where the intersection is more easily on their approach to the intersection, particularly at night. Caltrans maintenance personnel will complete this before project construction.

Comment from Linda Cyra-Korsgaard

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Linda Cyra-Korsgaard

Address: 31315 Ruth Hill Rd

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Self

(Checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

1. We need a multimodal pathway from Pizza/Auto store to library as a first priority.
2. We need a tree replacement greater than 1:1 to keep this highway scenic. For exist. trees over 12" it should be a ratio of 1:1 caliper inch.
3. Driveways on both sides of the ROW should be defined to increase safety- knowing where cars are turning will make two way turn safer.
4. An additional project should be initiated for G. Smith/180 intersection.
5. A study should determine if the traffic speed can be lowered.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Newsletter, Other: neighbor to neighbor

Comment 1:

We need a multimodal pathway from Pizza/Auto store to library as a first priority.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated. The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a customer service request is suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment 2:

We need a tree replacement greater than 1:1 to keep this highway scenic. For exist. trees over 12" it should be a ratio of 1:1 caliper inch.

Response to comment 2: This project will replace one tree at a 10-to-1 ratio, and it will replace six trees at a minimum 1-to-1 ratio (up to a 5-to-1 ratio). The Scenic Highway designation is protected by the Open Space and Conservation Element of the Fresno County General Plan. The inch-per-inch replacement ratio is a mitigation measure outlined in the draft and final Environmental Impact Report completed for the Fresno County General Plan. The Fresno County General Plan does not govern activities within the Caltrans right-of-way. Therefore, this project will not impact the Scenic Highway designation of State Route 180.

Comment 3:

Driveways on both sides of the ROW should be defined to increase safety-knowing where cars are turning will make two way turn safer.

Response to comment 3: Caltrans does not require the delineation of driveways. If an individual wants delineators to be placed on their driveway, it is up to the individual to work with the Caltrans Permits Office and the County of Fresno to obtain permission for the placement of delineation markers.

Comment 4:

An additional project should be initiated for G. Smith/180 intersection.

Response to comment 4: This intersection has recently been evaluated as a part of this project and separately (on its own) and has been found to not meet conditions that would warrant the installation of a left-turn lane.

Comment 5:

A study should determine if the traffic speed can be lowered.

Response to comment 5: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Jackie Terrell

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Jackie Terrell

Address: 30653 E. Kings Canyon Rd

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Self

(Checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

Lower the speed limit thru the town to 35 mph.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Other: Letter to house

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Carolyn Mariscotti

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Carolyn Mariscotti

Address: 30205 Ruth Hill

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Williams Family Ranch

(Checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

Left hand turn lane at Geo Smith-

Speed limit reduced going through Squaw Valley

Pathway through Squaw Valley—for walking.

The left hand turn Lane at Geo smith is very important. It is a very difficult area at night when traffic is heavy

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Newsletter

Comment 1:

Speed limit reduced going through Squaw Valley

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated. Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment 2:

Pathway through Squaw Valley—for walking.

Response to comment 2: The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a customer service request is

suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment 3:

The left hand turn Lane at Geo smith is very important. It is a very difficult area at night when traffic is heavy.

Response to comment 3: The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road, Elwood Road, or Indian Guide Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Caltrans will install delineators (flexible vertical markers) at the intersection of State Route 180 at George Smith Road to help motorists see where the intersection is more easily on their approach to the intersection, particularly at night. Caltrans maintenance personnel will complete this before project construction.

Comment from Sheryl Mercier

Name: Sheryl Mercier

Address: 33533 Wolverine Ln

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Community and Friends of Scenic 180

(Not checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

1. Request: Pedestrian Pathway from edge of Bear Mt. Pizza to the Bear Mt. Library—Many walk to different businesses, children walk from Trading Center Bus drop off to Bear Mt. Library 5 days a week during the school year
2. Extend the middle lane to the church entrance
3. Turn lane at George Smith

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Other: email/mail

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Request: Pedestrian Pathway from edge of Bear Mt. Pizza to the Bear Mt. Library—Many walk to different businesses, children walk from Trading Center Bus drop off to Bear Mt. Library 5 days a week during the school year.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated. The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a customer service request is suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment 2:

Extend the middle lane to the church entrance

Turn lane at George Smith

Response to comment 2: The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road or the church entrance. In addition, George Smith Road has recently been evaluated separately (on its own) and has been found not to meet conditions that would warrant the installation of a left-turn lane. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment from Maricella Puckett

Name: Maricella Puckett

Address: PO Box 575

City: Dunlap

ZIP: 93722

Representing: Friends of Scenic 180

(Checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

I would like to submit the following comments on the proposed Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization improvements of this project* (please print):

Biggest concern after reviewing the maps is how it begins as a tapered line in the “middle of the church” versus before (heading east) the driveway. Personally, I believe there should be more attention paid to the HWY 180, George Smith, Bear Mtn Rd Intersection and speed should be reduced to 45 miles per hour from George Smith to Elwood.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Someone told me about it: direct email from Patterson’s ofc based on March 2022 meeting.

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Biggest concern after reviewing the maps is how it begins as a tapered line in the “middle of the church” versus before (heading east) the driveway. Personally, I believe there should be more attention paid to the HWY 180, George Smith, Bear Mtn Rd Intersection.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Your comments are appreciated. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road and Bear Mountain Road intersection or the church entrance. In addition, George Smith Road has recently been evaluated separately (on its own) and has been found not to meet conditions that would warrant the installation of a left-turn lane. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment 2:

...and speed should be reduced to 45 miles per hour from George Smith to Elwood.

Response to comment 2: Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Tracie Terrell

Comment 1, received on a comment card:

Name: Tracie Terrell

Address: 30653 E. Kings Canyon Rd

City: Squaw Valley

ZIP: 93675

Representing: Self

(Not checked) Please add me to the project mailing list

Lower speed limit through the town to 35 mph.

How Did You Hear About This Meeting? Other: Letter to house

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Jim Moore

Comment 1:

My name is Jim Moore, M- O- O- R- E. I live up here, obviously. I would like to see the divide get extended to include George Smith Road and as far as El Wood. My wife has had one accident turning onto George Smith Road, as well as almost had a second accident with the public on that same turn. Again, I know other people have had some close calls there too. So to extend it another -- it's not much further to take it to El Wood.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment from anonymous

Comment 1, received verbally via court reporter:

I moved up here in 1967, and since 1967, nobody trims the trees. Branches are hanging over the roads. I've had four different accidents at that intersection of El Wood and 180. I've been forced off the road by the fire department. They were in a hurry. They crossed the double yellow line. I stopped to make a left onto El Wood. I was going up the mountain and I crossed the line. I drove into a ditch. They left me there. I called the police. They never showed up.

I had to repair potholes on my dad's street, my street. My dad owns two parcels, about nine acres. He has two houses there. I own one house and two parcels. But I'm out there chopping down oak trees because they're hanging so low and they scratch the top of your hood. And here's one thing – I know this isn't anything to do with Caltrans or maybe it does – is that there are potholes in streets up here that were put in in 1967 or '66. They've never been repaved. Never. People go out there and they use concrete or they just fill them with gravel. Some of the streets are so steep and it's dangerous to drive down those streets if it's raining because the dirt and mud slide off the side of the mountains on the street and you're taking your life into your own hands. That's on Silver Lane.

I did mention the thing with the accident on 180 and El Wood. I've been forced off the road and run into the fence and had to repair the fence. My dad got smashed from behind. He had to put a new bumper. Hit-and-run. They took off. There was a guy who used to live up here, used to walk along the side of 180, and every time you drive down 180, he's taking his life in his own hands. A lot of people ride their bicycles up. You've got about eight inches, maybe ten inches where the white line and then there's a curb. On the other side of the curb, there's ditches that go down ten feet. Some of them just six feet. Like I say -- oh, kids ride up and down 180 on those little two wheel -- they're not skateboards. They're some sort of electric or power things and people are allowing their kids to ride those things.

What else can I say. Caltrans, there are potholes on 180 and they never fix them. They never fix them. You have to call and complain. I called the highway patrol. I called the sheriff's department. They did finally come out and fix a side of a mountain where the big ten-ton trucks, garbage trucks, come down the hill. They come to the intersection of El Wood and Hall Lane. I live on Hall Lane. The road is completely demolished. I go out there, I'll put asphalt. The next week the asphalt is gone. Finally after all the complaints I made, somebody came out from Sanger, the City of Sanger, and they repaved that section. But what's terrible is there's these bumps. People come off Hall Lane to get on 180 and you bottom out. They repaved El Wood so many times that -- maybe like ten times -- that the asphalt is probably like a

foot deep. But they don't take care of the side streets because "they're not public domain" or something like that. They're private roads. What's terrible is I know in Fresno, Sanger, Redding -- Reedley, their roads are always repaved. Downtown Fresno in the upper middle class neighborhoods, the roads are pristine, black asphalt. Up here everybody drives four-wheel drives. I have to chase people off my property because they want to drive up the mountains with their four-wheel drives. I've had people pull guns on me. That's another problem. Everybody up here should have either a pickup truck or some sort of four-wheel drive because the roads are so bad. That intersection, one of the problems with that intersection on El Wood, some of the people, the neighbors go out there with their tractor and they fill in the little ditches that go about a foot deep on the side of the road. It will rain and get washed out. On the other side, there's a hill and that gets washed onto El Wood and 180.

What's really terrible is hundreds and hundreds of people drive on El Wood because of the beautiful drive. They have a speed limit of 55 miles an hour. It should be 35. But they'll be racing through. They have torn out 80 feet of my fence because they're drunk. Oh, drunks. The little gas station sells liquor. The drunks go there, pick up their liquor, they come out, they don't stop. They just pull right out in front of you. It used to be a 45-mile zone. It's up to 55 again. Out of the pizza parlor, the drunks come out. They don't stop. They just pull right out in front of you. When I drive this little section, I do 45. When I drive El Wood, I do 35. But it's a 55-mile zone. They did have 45-mile zone, but now it's back to 55.

One more thing, there was a guy who lived up here. He got hit and run over at that intersection of El Wood and 180. He left. He disappeared. I tried to stop and help him. Other people stopped and the guy that hit him took off.

Up here, I believe I heard that millions or billions of dollars are being given by the Federal Government. And the thing is I know the money will be used in the City of Fresno first and the rest of the communities maybe get nothing. The county transit, they're right in front of the gas station. There's a little building. It's supposed to be a little hangout place, a little bench for people to wait for the bus. There was a bus up here, it ran for about a week. Then they decided there wasn't enough people taking the bus.

Another thing horrible -- terrible thing, during the summer, so many people come up from 63, Hill Valley Road, then they get on 180. Very bad, dangerous intersection. A lot of people have gotten run over on that road that are riding bicycles. That intersection, again, it's 55-mile zone. I've seen drunks and young people laying on the ground passed out at the intersection of 63 and 180. They love parking there, especially on Fourth of July. They're all drinking. The police do nothing. The deputy sheriff's do nothing. That's why now, I believe that's why when I called the police, they refer me to the California Highway Patrol. And they've told me thank you for calling and reporting this sort of stuff

because the county doesn't do anything. It's because it's a big county. But the roads are just -- I don't know. It's just terrible.

The Caltrans guys, they've got a load of asphalt. They want to get rid of it. They just throw it over the side of the road. They don't fix the potholes, but they'll throw it on the side of the road where people pull off to park for emergencies. Then there's potholes in this area and they don't fix the potholes. What they do is they just dump the extra asphalt they have. Sometimes it's like a pickup truckload of asphalt. I'd love to have that for my driveway. But instead of fixing the potholes, like I said, they're dumping it. Sometimes they dump it right in the middle of the road and I go around them. A couple of times they've been so big piles, I'll go out there with a shovel and a pick to break it off and push it off the side of the road. Caltrans is doing a very bad job.

The drunks -- on my street, El Wood, I pick up whiskey bottles, beer cans, you name it. In one weekend they'll be like 10 or 15 bottles out there. There was one time every morning for about four months there would be a guy driving, I suppose going to work, and getting these little bottles of tequila or whiskey or vodka. Every morning I go out there and pick up one little bottle. It's kind of terrible. The police don't do their job. Caltrans doesn't do their job.

63 -- this is nothing to do up here, but 63 is the way I go to Visalia. It's really fast. Fresno is 35 miles, Visalia is 28. So I go shopping at Visalia. A lot of people up here don't go to the City of Fresno. They go to Visalia. Some of the parts of 63 are in pretty good shape. Other parts, they're horrible. They're horrible. You get off the pavement, you're in a ditch like a foot deep. You'll tear out the bottom of your suspension. You'll probably get caught and flip over. People don't do 55. They're doing 70, 80 on 180, 63. I'm going 55 and people are flying by. 63, a lot of people take that shortcut to avoid Fresno, the City of Fresno. Buses, motor homes, vacationers all going to Sequoia, and I'll come up or go down 63 and it's on a weekend on a summer holiday or a weekend during the summer and you'll see buses, tourists, full of tourists. There's a lot of traffic all the time. Like right now there's a lot of traffic. A lot of traffic. Other times there's not.

Anyway, that's all I wanted to say. I know there's a lot of money out there from our Federal Government. Federal Government gave to the state and the county millions, but the thing is they only spend it on the nice neighborhoods. That's what I see when I go to Fresno. Beautiful well-kept sidewalks, the beautiful well-kept streets. But up here, like I say, since 1967, nothing. They don't repave anything. El Wood has been repaved, like I say, maybe in the past ten years, maybe three times. That's beautiful.

Caltrans, again, sometimes they'll repave one section and they won't repave another. But then you come up to the end of the road where they repaved and it's a drop zone. They'll put signs out there, 'bump.' They'll leave it up for two or three months. Then they take the signs away, but they never fix the bump.

On 63, there's a few places. On the intersection of El Wood and 180, I come almost to like five miles an hour to get off 180 to drop down. There's been repaving, but they never fix that drop. People go too fast. It's all full of gravel. They never use street sweepers. People will drop down. They're going too fast and they slide into those ruts. Caltrans does nothing. They don't do anything. If they would just fix the problems. Now they want to spend all this money widening and everything. That's great. But they got to fix all the other problems too. Not just -- maybe they're going to spend all the money widening that area, but they've got to take care of the people that live up here. There's a lot more people than there were before.

This is the truth. I have neighbors that allow people to live on their property. They'll be one, maybe three -- some places have three families living in cab-over campers or small trailers. That's not legal, but a lot of people, instead of being homeless, they'll pay some guy, I don't know how much, to live in their trailer or their little cab-over camper behind their houses. I know one guy, he's got five people living behind his house. Another one has three people. I don't know about other areas, but that means more traffic. I don't know. More homeless people. More alcoholics. More drug addicts. They move up here and I know a lot of them that are alcoholics. Like I say, that little liquor store/gas station by the pizza parlor, the booze they sell, then their customers leaving drunk. Like I said, they don't even stop. They just pull right out in front of you. Because I always go slow, I haven't ever had an accident with some drunk pulling out in front of me. That's it for now.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions on State Route 180 in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. For matters outside the project scope, please submit a customer service request so Caltrans can respond to any concerns you may have. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Please refer to the first two pages of Appendix B in this document for Caltrans' response regarding the request for a reduced speed limit in the project area.

Comment from Donna Hacker

Comment 1, received verbally via court reporter:

My name is Donna Hacker, H- A- C- K- E- R. I am representing Sierra Gateway Trust, Inc. Our question is once the right-of-way is expanded and the center lane is put in, what effect will that have on the setbacks for the scenic highway. Currently, Caltrans requires a 200-foot setback from the center line of the highway to the edge of the new development and the county has the responsibility to enforce that. So we would like to make sure that Caltrans has allotted for that setback within the plans that are going forward.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The Fresno County General Plan Policy Document, Policy OS-L.3d, states, “The design of [intensive land] development proposals shall also provide for the maintenance of a natural open space area two hundred (200) feet in depth parallel to the [Caltrans] right-of-way.” The work within the Caltrans right-of-way is not within the purview of the Fresno County Policy.

Comment from Christine Flannigan

Comment 1, received verbally via court reporter:

Christine, C- H- R- I- S- T- I- N- E, Flannigan, F- L- A- N- N- I- G- A- N. Could Caltrans incorporate a pedestrian pathway from Bear Mountain Pizza to Bear Mountain Library with the project.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Therefore, the inclusion of a pedestrian walkway is outside the project scope. To include pedestrian features into the project scope, there must be a demonstrated need for the features. Submitting a customer service request is suggested to demonstrate a need and obtain funding for that improvement. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

Comment from Lee Delap

Comment 1, received verbally via court reporter:

My name is Lee Delap. D- E- L- A- P. Looking at the scope of the project, the distance of the turn lane and where it's initiated on the west end, it does not address the driveway at the Mountain Valley Church or the sheriff's office substation. The turn lane starts before you get to the Bear Mountain Library. So there's two facilities that may require people making a turn that are not addressed by the project on the west end.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to the Mountain Valley Community Church or the sheriff's office substation. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment from Tom Williams

Comment 1, received verbally via court reporter:

My name is Tom Williams. I've lived up here all my life and I'm very concerned about the intersection of 180 and George Smith. To make a left turn from 180 to George Smith is very dangerous. The incline from 180 to George Smith is very steep and making a left turn, you cannot see George Smith Road at night. So it would be nice if they could illuminate it, or as someone suggested, a pocket turn, which is a short left-turn lane. Tell them I stress that vigorously. Thank you.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to George Smith Road. This intersection has also been evaluated separately (on its own) and has been found not to meet conditions that would warrant the installation of a left-turn lane. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Caltrans will install delineators (flexible vertical markers) at the intersection of State Route 180 at George Smith Road to help motorists see where the intersection is more easily on their approach to the intersection, particularly at night. Caltrans maintenance personnel will complete this before project construction.

Comment from Dale Mariscotti

Dale Mariscotti, M- A- R- I- S- C- O- T- T- I. 30205 Ruth Hill Road. My issue with this is they have it going -- I would say it needs to take the end, the east end line, which is west of Indian Guide and move that entire project back to encompass George Smith and Highway 180 intersection. The issue there is traffic. I would drive -- I was working in Clovis for years. When I leave Fresno, per se, around Dewolf Avenue, it's bumper to bumper. When they get to Bethel, traffic subsides. When I get to Frankwood, it subsides. When I get to Hills Valley, it subsides. As it comes up the hill, people are less traffic, going faster. As you notice, if you're going to drive down when you pass certain intersections, when it's a sweeping left turn coming down, you'll see lots of tire tracks. There's been a lot of wrecks there. A lot of wrecks on Highway 63 turnoff. There's been several instances at Ruth Hill Road and Highway 180. Ruth Hill Road going west at 180 does not meet Highway 180 center lines perpendicular, which is the Caltrans preference.

Comment 1, received verbally via court reporter:

I would say it needs to take the end, the east end line, which is west of Indian Guide and move that entire project back to encompass George Smith and Highway 180 intersection.

Response to comment 1: Thank you for your interest in the project. The project limits were chosen based on the location of the highest concentration of collisions found during the traffic collision investigation. The engineering analysis did not justify extending the project limits to the George Smith Road and Bear Mountain Road intersection or the church entrance. In addition, George Smith Road has recently been evaluated separately (on its own) and has been found not to meet conditions that would warrant the installation of a left-turn lane. Therefore, the high number of reported collisions near the center of the existing project limits warrant the two-way left-turn lane to remain from 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road to Elwood Road.

Comment 2:

There's been several instances at Ruth Hill Road and Highway 180. Ruth Hill Road going west at 180 does not meet Highway 180 center lines perpendicular, which is the Caltrans preference.

Response to comment 2: The project's purpose and need are to address the findings of the traffic safety analysis and reduce the number and severity of motorist-related collisions on State Route 180 in the area between George Smith Road and Elwood Road. Ruth Hill Road in the vicinity of State Route 180 is outside the project scope. Submitting a customer service request to Caltrans is suggested for Caltrans to respond to this concern. You can submit requests at the following website: csr.dot.ca.gov.

List of Technical Studies Bound Separately (Volume 2)

Visual Impact Assessment, March 2022

Air Quality Compliance Memorandum, March 2022

Natural Environment Study (Minimal Impacts), February 2022

Historic Property Survey Report, January 2022

Energy Memorandum, February 2022

Paleontological Identification Report, December 2020

Climate Change Report, March 2022

Hazardous Waste Compliance Memorandum, February 2021

Water Compliance Memorandum, October 2021

Noise Compliance Memorandum, November 2021

To obtain a copy of one or more of these technical studies/reports or the Initial Study, please send your request to:

Jennifer H. Taylor
District 6 Environmental Division
California Department of Transportation
2015 East Shields Avenue, Suite 100-200, Fresno, California 93726

Or send your request via email to: jennifer.taylor@dot.ca.gov
Or call: 559-287-9844

Please provide the following information in your request:

Project title: State Route 180 Two-Way Left-Turn Channelization

General location information: On State Route 180 between 0.4 mile east of George Smith Road and Elwood Road

District number-county code-route-post mile: 06-FRE-180-PM 89.6 to 90.7

Project ID number: 0620000037